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THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS



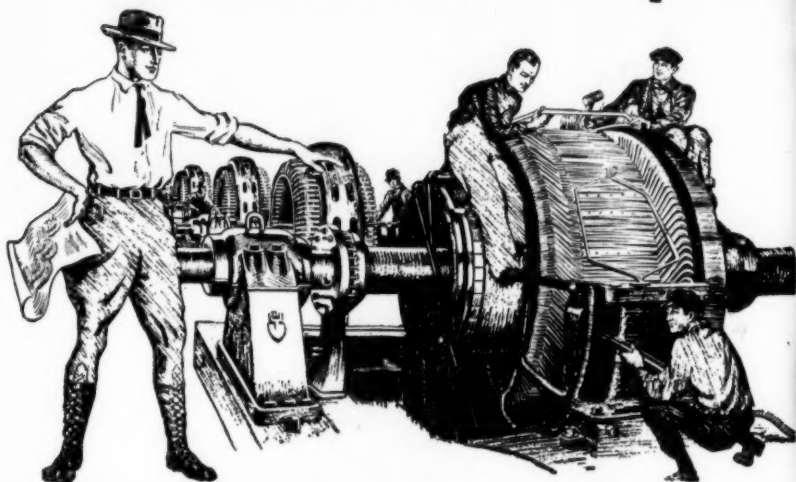
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March
1921

AINSLEE'S

THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS

Vol. XLVII
No. 1

CONTENTS

| | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|------------|
| THE BRIGHTENER. Complete Novelette | C. N. and A. M. Williamson | 1 |
| Which suggests an alluring occupation for indigent ladies, with a bit of intrigue, a near-murder, and thrilling suspense throughout. | | |
| AT FOUR O'CLOCK. Short Story | Peter Clark Macfarlane | 38 |
| In which the heroine, though suspended over an abyss of matrimony, holds to her own requisites for an ideal husband. | | |
| THE LONELY MR. LORD. Short Story | Rebecca Hooper Eastman | 51 |
| Barrett Lord had a novel remedy for lonesomeness in the "big city." And even in many New York it worked. | | |
| GRATITUDE. Verse | Carolyn Hall | 63 |
| SIMON. Short Story | Paul Hervey Fox | 64 |
| Corinna Ware had a mission in life, one of those "deathly promises" to fulfill, and out of the help a certain man gave her, flowered a romance. | | |
| LOVE AT THE DOOR. Verse | Clinton Scollard | 74 |
| THE TEAPOT SHOP. Verse | Mary Brent Whiteside | 75 |
| THE MIDDLE OF THE TALE. Short Story | Valma Clark | 76 |
| The conventional world was perhaps too small for Andren, who was more than life-size in love as in other things. | | |
| FROM A CITY WINDOW. Verse | Glenn Ward Dresbach | 84 |
| AUSTEN'S ARM. Short Story | Arthur Crabb | 85 |
| The golfer may here challenge the psychologist to explain a champion's lost drive. But the age-old formula of " <i>cherchez la femme</i> " might be aptly applied. | | |
| POETS IN THE MARKET PLACE. Verse | Mary Carolyn Davies | 96 |
| MORE SUPER-WOMEN. Series | Anice Terhune | 97 |
| Madame de Maintenon: She was born in prison, yet ruled France in its most glorious days. | | |
| WIND IN MY HAIR. Verse | Margaret Peckham | 103 |
| THAT'S THE PROPER SPIRIT. Short Story | Gene Markey | 104 |
| Introducing the perfect English butler, Smollett, and his activity on a Thursday out, in behalf of his master's heart affairs. | | |
| THE ARRANT ROVER. Serial | Berta Ruck | 111 |
| Archie Laverock continues, in this installment, his impassioned philandering. | | |
| ALMOST. Verse | Louise Heald | 128 |
| THE LOVER AT LARGE. Short Story | DuVernet Rabell | 129 |
| In which a professor's daughter, with the aid of a professional lover, takes a course not included in academic curricula. | | |
| CONFESSION. Verse | Abbie Huston Evans | 138 |
| THE FAMILY TRADITION. Part Two | Katharine Haviland Taylor | 139 |
| David Stoddard had picked up a cat on the street "because he was sorry for it." By the same token he cultivated Rita Paret. | | |
| VILLANELLE OF VICTORY. Verse | Walter Adolphe Roberts | 150 |
| AINSLEE'S BOOKS OF THE MONTH | | 151 |
| IN BROADWAY PLAYHOUSES | Dorothy Parker | 154 |
| TALKS WITH AINSLEE'S READERS | | 160 |

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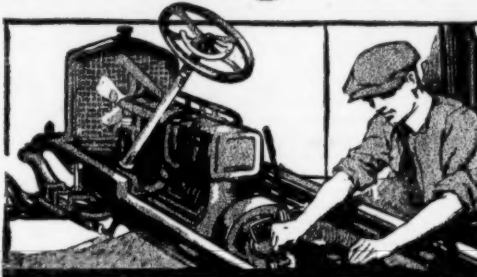
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Continued on third page following

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By J. E. Greenslade, President, N. S. T. A.

MY earnings during the past thirty days were more than \$1,000," writes Warren Hartle, of 4425 North Robey Street, Chicago, Illinois.

Yet previous to this he had worked ten years in the railway mail service at salaries ranging from \$900 to \$1,600 a year. What was the secret of his sudden rise from small pay to such magnificent earnings?

It was the same secret that has brought hundreds of others success, independence and money beyond their fondest dreams.

The stories of these men's amazing jumps to the big pay class read like fiction; but they are matters of record and can be verified by any one on request. Here are just a few examples, as told in the words of the men themselves:

"I had never earned more than \$60 a month. Last week I cleared \$306 and this week \$218. You have done wonders for me." Geo. W. Kearns, 107 W. Park Place, Oklahoma City, Okla.

"My earnings for the past thirty days are \$1,562 and I won Second Prize in March although I only worked two weeks during that month." C. W. Campbell, Greensburg, Pa.

"My earnings for March were over \$1,000 and over \$1,800 for the last six weeks, while last week my earnings were \$356." L. P. Overstreet, Dallas, Texas.

But now comes the most amazing part of it all! What these men have done, hundreds of others have done, hundreds are doing today, and hundreds will do tomorrow. You may be one of them, for now the same opportunity that put these men into the big money class is open to you! You are going to read here and now, just as they read at one time, the secret of earning big money. Then in the next five minutes you can take the same first step that brought to them such extraordinary success.

The Secret Disclosed

THERE is really no mystery about it. It is simply a matter of old business fact. The "secret" is that the big money is in the selling end of business. And any man of normal intelligence and ambition can quickly become a Star Salesman.

If you had told these men that such brilliant success awaited them in the field of Selling, they would have laughed at you—they would have told you that it was absurd to think of their becoming Salesmen, for they had never sold a dime's worth of goods in their lives.



Send Me Your Name

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It will bring you full particulars of the wonderful system of Salesmanship Training and Free Employment Service of the National Salesmen's Training Association. Surely you owe it to yourself to at least examine the evidence. All that is required is to mail the coupon without delay. The matter is so important that you should do it NOW. Address

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Without obligation on my part send me your Free Salesmanship Book and Free Proof that you can make me a Star Salesman. Also tell me how the N. S. T. A. Free Employment Service will help me to a selling position and send list of business lines with openings for Salesmen.

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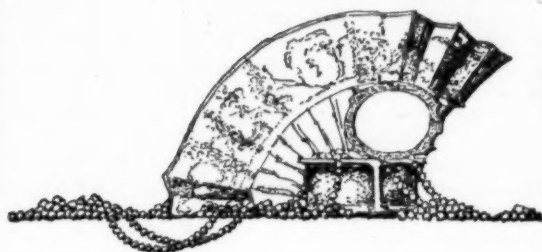
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The Brightener

By

C. N. and A. M. Williamson

Authors of

"The Lightning Conductor,"

"The Second Latchkey," etc.

CHAPTER I.

I WONDER who will tell her," I heard somebody say, just outside the arbor.

The somebody was a woman, and the somebody else who answered was a man.

"Glad it won't be me," he replied ungrammatically.

I didn't know who these somebodies were, and I didn't much care. For the first instant, the one thing I did care about was that they should remain outside the arbor, to which I had retreated, instead of finding their way in. Then the next words waked my interest. They sounded mysterious, and I loved mysteries—then.

"It's an awful thing to have happen—a double blow, in the same moment!" exclaimed the woman.

They had come to a standstill close to the arbor, but there was hope that they mightn't discover it, because it wasn't an ordinary arbor. It was really a deep, sweet-scented hollow scooped out of an immense arbor-vitæ tree, disguised like its sister trees in a group beside the path. The hollow contained an old marble seat, on which I was sitting, but the low entrance could only be reached by one who knew of its ex-

istence by passing between those other trees.

I felt suddenly rather curious about the person struck by a "double blow," for a "fellow feeling makes one wondrous kind;" and at that moment I was a sort of modern, female Damocles myself. In fact, I had got the Marchese d'Ardini to bring me away from the ballroom to hide in this secret arbor of his old Roman garden because my mood was out of tune for dancing. I hadn't wanted to come, but grandmother had insisted. Now I had made an excuse of wanting an ice in order to get rid of my dear old friend, the marchese, for a few minutes.

"She couldn't have cared about the poor chap," said the man in a hard voice with a slight American accent, "or she wouldn't be here to-night."

My heart missed a beat.

"They say," explained the woman, "that her grandmother practically forced her to marry him, and, although the armistice had been signed, arranged it at a time when he'd have to report for duty an hour after the wedding, so they shouldn't be *really* married if anything should still happen to him. I don't know whether that's true or not!"

But I knew! I knew that it was true because they were talking about me. In

an instant—before I'd decided whether to rush out or sit still—I knew something more.

"You ought to be well informed, though," the woman's voice continued; "you're a distant cousin, aren't you?"

"'Distant' is the word! About fourth cousin, four times removed," the man laughed with frank bitterness. No wonder, as he'd unsuccessfully claimed the right to our family estates to hitch on to his silly old, dug-up title!

Not only did I know, now, of whom they were talking, but I knew one of those who talked: a red-headed giant of a man I'd seen to-night for the first time, though he had annoyed grandmother and me, from a distance, for years. In fact, we'd left home and gone to Rome because of him. Indirectly, it was his fault that I was married, since, if it hadn't been for him, I shouldn't have come to Italy or met Prince di Miramare. I did not stop to think of all this, however. It just flashed through my subconscious mind, while I asked myself: "What has happened to Paolo?" He was still engaged in flying in Italy, though the war was now several months over. "Has he been killed or only injured? And what do the brutes mean by a 'double blow'?"

I had no longer the impulse to rush out. I waited with hushed breath. I didn't care whether or not it was nice to eavesdrop. All I thought of was my intense desire to hear what those two would say next.

"Like grandmother, like granddaughter, I suppose," went on the ex-cowboy baronet, James Courtenaye. "A hard-hearted lot, my only surviving female relatives seem to be! Her husband at the front liable to die at any minute, her grandmother dying at home, and our fair young princess dancing at a ball."

"You forget what's happened to-night, Sir Jim, when you speak of your 'surviving' female relatives," said the woman.

"By George, yes! I've got only one left now. And I expect, from what I hear, I shall be called upon to support her!"

Then grandmother was dead—wonderful, indomitable grandmother—who, only three hours ago, had said, "You *must* go to this dance, Elizabeth. I wish it!" Grandmother, whose last words had been: "You are worthy to be what I've made you—a princess. You are exactly what I was at your age."

Poor, magnificent grandmother! She had often told me that she was the greatest beauty of her day. She had sent me away from her to-night, so that she might die alone. Or had the news of the *other* blow come while I was gone and killed her?

Dazedly I stumbled to my feet, and in a second I should have been pushing past that pair; but just at this moment footsteps came hurrying along the path. Those two moved out of the way with some murmured words I didn't catch, and then the marchese was with me again. I saw his plump figure silhouetted on the silvered-blue dusk of moonlight. He had brought no ice! He flung out empty hands in a despairing gesture which told that he also knew.

"My dear child—my poor little princess——" he began in Italian. But I cut him short.

"I've heard some people talking! Grandmother is dead. And—Paolo?"

"His plane crashed. It was instant death—not painful. Alas, the telegram came to your hotel, and the signora, your grandmother, opened it. Her maid found it in her hand. The brave spirit had fled! Mr. Carstairs, her solicitor, and his kind American wife came here at once. How fortunate was the business which brought him to Rome just now, looking after your interest! A search party was after me, while I was seeking a mere ice! And

now the Carstairs wait to take you to your hotel. I cannot leave our guests or I should go with you, too."

He got me back to the old palazzo by a side door, and guided me to a quiet room where the Carstairs were waiting. They were not alone. An American friend of the ex-cowboy was with them—another self-made millionaire, but a *much* better made one, by the name of Roger Fane—and with him a school friend of mine whom he was in love with, Lady Shelagh Leigh. Shelagh ran to me with her arms out, but I pushed her aside. A darling girl, and I wouldn't have done it for the world if I had been myself!

She shrank away, hurt; and vaguely I was conscious that the dark man with the tragic eyes, Roger Fane, was coaxing her out of the room. Then I forgot them both as I turned to the Carstairs for news. I little knew then how soon and strangely my life and Shelagh's and Roger Fane's would twine together in a Gordian knot of mystery!

I don't remember much of what followed, except that a taxi rushed us, the Carstairs and me, to the Grand Hotel as fast as it could go through the streets filled with crowds shouting. Mrs. Carstairs, a mouse of a woman to look at, a benevolent Machiavelli in brain, held my hand gently and said nothing, while her clever old husband tried to cheer me with words. Afterward I learned that she spent those minutes in mapping out my whole future!

You see, *she* knew what I didn't know at that time: that I hadn't enough money in the world to pay for grandmother's funeral, to say nothing of our hotel bills!

A clock, when you come to think of it, is a fortunate animal.

When it runs down, it can just comfortably stop. No one expects it to do anything else. No one accuses it of weakness or lack of backbone because

it doesn't struggle nobly to go on ticking and striking. It is not sternly commanded to wind itself. Unless somebody takes that trouble off its hands, it stays stopped. Whereas, if a girl or a young, able-bodied woman runs down—that is, comes suddenly to the end of everything, including resources—she mayn't give up ticking for a single second. *She* must wind *herself*; and this is really quite as difficult for her to do as for a clock, unless she is abnormally instructed and accomplished.

I am neither. The principal things I know how to do are to look pretty and to be nice to people, so that when people are with me they feel purry and pleasant. With this stock in trade I had a perfectly gorgeous time in life until Fate stuck a finger into my mechanism and upset the working of my pendulum.

I ought to have realized that the gorgeousness would some time come to a bad and sudden end. But I was trained to put off what wasn't delightful and to do or think of to-day until to-morrow, because to-morrow could take care of itself and droves of shorn lambs as well.

Grandmother and I had been pals since I was five, when my father, her son, and my mother quietly died of diphtheria and left me, her namesake, to her. We lived at adorable Courtenaye Abbey on the Devonshire coast, where furniture, portraits, silver, and china fit for a museum were common, everyday objects to my childish eyes. None of these things could be sold, or the Abbey, for they were all heirlooms of *our* branch of the Courtenayes—not the Americanized ex-cowboy's branch, be it understood! But the place could be let with everything in it; and when Mr. Carstairs was first engaged to unravel grandmother's financial tangles, he implored her permission to find a tenant. That was before the war, when I was seventeen; and grandmother refused.

"What!" she cried—I was in the room, all ears. "Would you have me advertise the fact that we're reduced to beggary, just as the time has come to present Elizabeth? I'll do nothing of the kind! You must stave off the smash. That's your business. Then Elizabeth will marry a title with money or an American millionaire or some one, and prevent it from *ever* coming."

This thrilled me, and I felt like a Joan of Arc out to save her family, not by capturing a foe, but a husband.

Mr. Carstairs did stave off the smash, Heaven or its opposite alone knows how; and grandmother spent about half a future millionaire husband's possible income in taking a town house with a train of servants, renting a Rolls-Royce, and buying for us both the most divine clothes imaginable. I was long and leggy and thin as a young colt; but my face was all right, because it was a replica of grandmother's at seventeen. My eyes and dimples were said to be something to dream about, even then—I often dreamed of them myself after much flattery at balls!—and already my yellow-brown braids fell far below my waistline. Besides, I had grandmother's early manner—as one says of an artist, and really she was one—so, naturally, I received proposals—lots of proposals. But they were the wrong lots!

All the good-looking young men who wanted to marry me had never a penny to do it on. All the rich ones were so old and appalling that even grandmother hadn't the heart to order me to the altar. So there it was! Then that awful Jim Courtenaye came over from America, where, after an adventurous life, or worse, he'd made pots of money by hook or crook, probably the latter. He stirred up, out of the mud of the past, a trumpery baronetcy bestowed by stodgy King George the Third upon an ancestor of his in that younger, less-important branch of the Courtenayes. Also did he strive expensively to prove

a right to Courtenaye Abbey as well, though not one of *his* Courtenayes had ever put a nose inside it. He didn't do this, he kindly explained to Mr. Carstairs, to snatch the property out of our mouths. If he got it, we might go on living there till the end of our days. All he wanted was to *own* the place and have the right to keep it up decently, as we had never been able to do.

Well, he had to be satisfied with his title and without the Abbey, which was luck for us. But there our luck ended. Not only did the war break out before I had a single proposal worth acceptance, but an awful thing happened at the Abbey.

Grandmother had kept the rented town house, from her love of display in my behalf, no matter what the expense. From time to time she replenished the household equipment from supplies which were on hand at the Abbey. Grandmother wasn't a woman to be conquered by shortages! On one occasion she remembered a hundred yards of bargain stuff she'd bought to be used for new dust covers at the Abbey, and as all the servants but two were discharged when we left for town, the sheets had never been made up. And now she had found a use for them.

She could not be spared for a day, but I could. By this time I was nineteen, and felt fifty in wisdom, as all girls do since the war. Grandmother was old-fashioned in some ways, but new-fashioned in others, so she ordered me off to Courtenaye Abbey by myself to unlock the room where the bundle had been put. Train service was not good, and I would have to stay the night; but she wired to old Barlow and his wife, once lodge keepers, now trusted guardians of the house. She told Mrs. Barlow—a dear old Devonshire thing, like peaches and cream, called by me "Barley"—to get my old room ready, and Barlow was to meet me at the train. At the last moment,

however, Shelagh Leigh—my close friend and now just out of the school-room—decided to go; and if we had guessed it, this was to turn out one of the most important decisions of her life.

Barlow met us, of course; and how he had changed since last I'd seen his comfortable old face! I expected him to be charmed with the sight of me, if not of Shelagh, for I was always a favorite with Barl and Barley; but the poor man was absent-minded and queer. When a stuffy station cab from Courtenaye Coombe had rattled us to the shut-up Abbey, I went at once to the housekeeper's room and had a heart-to-heart talk with the Barlows. It seemed that while the war was still on the police had been to the house and had "run all over it," because of reports that lights had flashed from the upper windows over the sea at night—signals to submarines!

Nothing suspicious had been found, however, and the police had made it clear that they considered the Barlows themselves above reproach. Indeed, an inspector had actually apologized for the visit, saying that the police had pooh-poohed the reports at first. They had paid no attention until "the story was all over the village;" and there are not enough miles between Courtenaye Abbey and Plymouth dockyards for even the rankest rumors to be disregarded long.

Barley was convinced that one of our own ghosts had been waked by the war, the ghost of a young girl burned to death, who now and then rushes like a column of fire through the front rooms of the second floor in the west wing; but the old pet hoped I wouldn't let this idea of hers keep me awake. The ghost of a "nice English young lady" was preferable in her opinion to a military spy in the flesh! I agreed, but I was not keen on seeing either. My nerves were jumpy. Consequently I lay awake, hour after hour, though Shelagh

was in grandmother's room, adjoining mine, with the door open between.

When I did sleep I must have slept heavily. I dreamed that I was a prisoner on a submarine and that signals from Courtenaye Abbey flashed straight into my face. They flashed so brightly that they set me on fire, and with the knowledge that if I couldn't escape at once I should become a family ghost, I wrenched myself awake with a start.

Yes, I was awake; although what I saw was so astonishing that I thought it must be another nightmare. There really was a strong light pouring into my eyes. What it came from I don't know to this day, but probably an electric torch. Anyhow, the ray was so powerful that, though directed upon my face, it faintly lit another face close to mine, as I suddenly sat up in bed.

Instantly that face drew back, and then, as if on a second thought, after a surprise, out went the light. By contrast, the darkness was black as a bath of ink, though I'd pulled back the curtains before going to bed, and the sky was white with stars. But on my retina was photographed a pale, illumined circle with a face looking out of it, looking straight at me. You know how quickly these light pictures begin to fade; but before this dimmed I had time to verify my first waking impression.

The face was a woman's face, beautiful and hideous at the same time, like Medusa. It was young, yet old. It had deep-set, long eyes which slanted slightly up to the corners. It was thin and hollow-cheeked, with a pointed chin, cleft in the middle; and it was framed with bright auburn hair of a curiously unreal color.

When the blackness closed in, and I heard in the dark scrambling sounds, like a rat running in the wainscot, I gave a cry. In my horror and bewilderment I wasn't yet sure whether I was awake or asleep; but some one answered. Dazed as I was, I recognized Shelagh's

sweet young voice, and, at the same instant her electric bed lamp was switched on in the next room. "Coming, coming!" she cried, and appeared in the doorway presently.

By this time I had the sense to switch on my own lamp, and, comforted by it and her presence, I told Shelagh in a few words what had happened.

"Why, how weird! I dreamed the same dream!" she broke in. "At least, I dreamed about a light and a face."

Hastily we compared notes and realized that Shelagh had not dreamed. The woman of mystery had visited us both, only she had gone to Shelagh first and had not been scared away, because Shelagh hadn't thoroughly waked up.

We decided that our vision was no ghost, but that, for once, rumor was right. In some amazing way a strange woman had concealed herself in the rambling old Abbey—the house has several secret rooms of which we know, and there might be others, long forgotten—and possibly she *had* been carrying on signaling of some sort until warned of danger by that visit from the police. We resolved to rise before dawn and walk to Courtenaye Coombe to let the police know what had happened to us; but, as it turned out, a great deal more was to happen before dawn.

We felt pretty sure that the weird intruder would cease her activities for the night, after the shock of finding our rooms occupied. Still, it would be cowardly, we thought, to lie in bed. We slipped on dressing gowns, therefore, and with candles—only our wing was furnished with the electric light which dear grandmother never paid for—we descended fearsomely to the Barlow's quarters. Having roused the old couple and got them to put on some clothes, a search party of four perambulated the house. As far as we could see, however, the place was innocent of strangers, and at length we crept into bed again.

We didn't mean or expect to sleep, of course, but we must all have "dropped off;" otherwise we should have smelled the smoke long before we did. As it was, the great hall slowly burned until Barlow's usual getting-up hour. Shelagh and I knew nothing until Barl came pounding at my door. Then the stinging of our nostrils and eyelids was a fire alarm!

It's wonderful how quickly you can do things when you have to! Ten minutes later I was running as fast as I could go to the village, and might have earned a prize for a two-mile sprint if I hadn't raced alone. By the time the fire engines reached the Abbey, it was too late to save a whole side of the glorious old "linen fold" paneling of the hall. The celebrated staircase was injured, too, and several suits of historic armor, as well as a number of antique weapons.

Fortunately the portraits were all in the picture gallery, and the fire was stopped before it had swept beyond the hall. Where it had started was soon learned, but *how* it had started remained a mystery; shavings and oil tins had apparently been stuffed behind the paneling. The theory of the police was that the intruder—no one doubted her existence now!—had seen that the "game was up," since the place would be strictly watched from that night on. Therefore, she had attempted to burn down the famous old house before she lost her chance, or she had, perhaps, already made preparations to destroy it when her other work should be ended.

There was a hue and cry all over the county in pursuit of the fugitive, which echoed as far as London; but the woman had escaped, and not even a trace of her was found.

Grandmother openly proclaimed that her inspiration in sending for some dust covers had saved the Abbey. This was all very well to bask in self-respect and the praise of friends. When, however,

we were bombarded by newspaper men, who took revenge for grandmother's snubs by publishing interviews with Sir "Jim"—now Major Courtenaye, D. S. O., M. C.—she lost her temper.

It was bad enough, she complained, to have the Abbey turned prematurely into a ruin, but for "that fellow" to proclaim all over the place that it wouldn't have happened had he been the owner, was too much! The democratic and socialist papers—"rags," according to grandmother—stood up for the self-made cowboy baronet and blamed the great lady who had "thrown away in selfish extravagance" what should have paid the upkeep of a historic monument. This, to a woman of my grandmother's dignity of bearing! And to pile Ossa on Pelion, our Grosvenor Square landlord was cad enough to tell that he had never received his rent! Which statement, by the way, was all the more of a libel because it was true.

Now you understand how Sir James Courtenaye was responsible for driving us to Italy and indirectly bringing about my marriage; for grandmother wiped the dust of Grosvenor Square off our feet with Italian passports and swept me off to new activities in Rome.

Here was Mr. Carstairs' moment to say: "I told you so! If only you had let the Abbey when I advised you that it was best, all would have been well. Now, with the central hall in ruins, nobody would be found dead in the place!" But being a particularly kind man, he said nothing of the sort. He merely implored grandmother to live economically in Rome; and, of course, being grandmother, she did nothing of the sort.

We lived at the most expensive hotel, and whenever we had any money, gave it to the Croce Rossa, running up bills for ourselves. But we spiced charity with joy, and my descriptive letters to Shelagh were so attractive that she per-

suaded Mr. and Mrs. Pollen, her guardians—uncle and aunt, who were sickening snobs—to bring her to Rome. Then, not long after, the cowboy's friend, Roger Fane, late of the American Expeditionary Force, appeared on the scene. He was a thrilling, handsome, and mysteriously tragic person. James Courtenaye also turned up for a sojourn in Italy, but grandmother and I contrived never to meet him. And when our financial affairs began to rumble like an earthquake, Mr. Carstairs decided to see grandmother in person.

It was when she received his telegram that she decided I must accept Prince Miramare. She had wanted an Englishman for me; but a prince is a prince; and though Paolo was far from rich at the moment, he had the prospect of an immediate million—lire, alas, not pounds. An enormously rich Greek offered him that sum for the fourteenth-century Castello di Miramare on a mountain all its own, some miles from Rome. In consideration of a large sum paid to his younger brother, Carlo, the two Miramare princes would break the entail; and this quick solution of our difficulties was to be a surprise for Mr. Carstairs.

Paolo and I were married as hastily as such matters can be arranged abroad, between persons of different nations; and it was true, as those cynics outside the arbor said, that my soldier prince went back to his military duty an hour after the wedding. It was just after we were safely married that grandmother ceased to fight a temperature of a hundred and three, and gave up to an attack of "flu." She gave up quite quietly, for she thought that, whatever happened, I would be rich, because she had browbeaten lazy, unbusinesslike Paolo into making a will in my favor. The one flaw in this calculation was his concealing from her the fact that the entail was not yet legally broken. No contract between him and the Greek

could be signed while the entail existed; therefore Paolo's will gave me only his personal possessions. These were not much, for I doubt if even the poor boy's uniforms had been paid for. But I am thankful that grandmother died without realizing her failure; and I hope that her spirit was far away before the excowboy began making overtures.

If it had not been for Mrs. Carstairs' inspiration, I don't know what would have become of me!

CHAPTER II.

You may remember what Jim Courtenaye said in the garden: that he would probably have to support me.

Well, he dared to offer, through Mr. Carstairs, to do that very thing, "for the family's sake." At least, he proposed to pay off all our debts and allow me an income of four hundred a year, if it turned out that my inheritance from Paolo was nil.

When Mr. Carstairs passed on the offer to me, as he was bound to do, I said what I felt dear grandmother would have wished me to say: "I'll see him *dead* first!" And I added, "I hope you'll repeat that to the *person*."

I think, from later developments, Mr. Carstairs cannot have repeated it verbatim. After the funeral, when I knew the worst about the entail, and that Paolo's brother Carlo was breaking it wholly for his *own* benefit and not at all for mine, Mr. Carstairs asked sympathetically if I had thought what I should like to do.

"Like to do?" I echoed bitterly. "I should like to go home to the dear old Abbey and restore the place as it ought to be restored, and have plenty of money without lifting a finger to get it. What I *must* do is a different question."

"Well, then, my dear, supposing we put it in that brutal way. Have you thought—er—"

"I've done nothing except think. But

I've been brought up with about as much earning capacity as a mechanical doll. The only thing I have the slightest talent for being is—a detective!"

"Good gracious!" was Mrs. Carstairs' comment on that.

"I've felt ever since that awful spooky night at the Abbey that I had it in me to make a good detective," I modestly explained.

"'Princess di Miramare, Private Detective,' would be a distinctly original signboard over an office door," the old lady reflected. "But I believe *I've* evolved something more practical, considering your name and your age—twenty-one, isn't it?—and your *looks*. Not that detective talents mayn't come in handy even in the profession I'm going to suggest. Very likely they will, among other things. If you take it up, you'll need to make use of all the talents you can get hold of."

"Do you, by chance, mean marriage?" I inquired coldly. "I've never been a wife. But I suppose I am a sort of widow."

"If you weren't 'a sort of widow,' you couldn't cope with the profession I've—er—invented. You wouldn't be independent enough."

"Invented? Then you don't mean marriage! And not even the stage! I warn you that once I solemnly promised grandmother never to go on the stage."

"I know, my child. She mentioned that to Henry, my husband, when they were discussing your future, before you both left London. My idea is *much* more original than marriage or even the stage. It popped into my mind the night Mrs. Courtenaye died, while we were in the taxi between the Palazzo Ardini and this hotel. I said to myself, "Dear Elizabeth shall be a brightener!"

"A brightener?" I repeated, with a vague vision of polishing windows or brasses. "I don't—"

"You wouldn't! I told you I'd in-

vented the profession expressly for you. Now I'm going to tell you what it is. I felt that you wouldn't care to be a tame companion, even to the most gilded millionairess, or a social secretary to—"

"Horror! No, I couldn't be a tame anything."

"That's why brightening is your line. A brightener couldn't *be* a brightener and tame. She must be brilliant, winged, soaring above the plane of those she brightens; expressive, to make herself appreciated; capable of taking the lead in social direction. Why, my dear, people will fight to get you—pay any price to secure you! Now do you understand?"

I didn't. So she explained. After that dazzling preface, the explanation seemed rather an anticlimax. Still, I saw that there might be something in the plan, if it could be worked. And Mrs. Carstairs guaranteed to work it.

My widowhood—save the mark—qualified me to become a chaperon. And my princesshood would make me a gilded one. Chaperonage, at its best, might be amusing. But chaperonage was far from the whole destiny of a brightener. A brightener need not confine herself to female society, as a mere companion must. A young woman, even though a widow and a princess, could not "companion" a person of the opposite sex, even if he were a hundred. But she might, from a discreet distance, be his brightener. That is, she might brighten a lonely man's life without tarnishing her own reputation.

"After all," Mrs. Carstairs went on, "in spite of what's said against him, man is a fellow being. If a cat may look at a king, man may look at a princess. And unless he's in her set, he can be made to pay for the privilege. Think of a lonely button or bootmaker! What would he give for the honor of invitations to tea, with introductions and social advice, from the popular

Princess di Miramare? He might have a wife or daughters, or both, who needed a social boost. They would come extra! He might be a widower; in fact, I've caught the first widower for you already. But, unluckily, you can't use him yet."

"Ugh!" I shuddered. "Sounds as if he were a fish, wriggling on a hook till I'm ready to tear it out of his gills!"

"He is a fish, a big fish. In fact, I may as well break it to you that he is Roger Fane."

"Good heavens!" I cried. "It would take more electricity than I'm fitted with to brighten his tragic and mysterious aura!"

"Not at all. In fact, you are the only one who *can* do it."

"What are you driving at? He's dead in love with Shelagh Leigh."

"That's just it. As things are, he has no hope of marrying Shelagh. She likes him, as you probably know, better than I do, for you're her best friend, although she's a year or so younger than you—"

"Two years."

"Well, as I was going to say, in many ways she's a child compared to you. She's as beautiful as one of those cut-off cherubs in the prayer books and as old-fashioned as an early Victorian sampler. These blond visions, with naturally waving golden hair and rosebud mouths and eyes as big as half crowns, have that drawback, as I've discovered since I came to live in England. In America, we don't grow early Victorian buds. You know perfectly well that those detestable snobs, the Pollens, don't think Fane good enough for Shelagh, in spite of his money. Money's the one nice thing they've got themselves which they can pass on to Shelagh. Probably they forced the wretched Miss Pollen, who was the male snob's sister, to marry the old Marquis of Leigh, just as they wish to force Shelagh to marry some other wreck of

his sort and die young, as her mother did. The girl's a dear, a perfect lamb; but lambs can't stand up against lions. They generally lie down inside them. But with you at the helm the Pollen lions could be forced——"

"Not if they knew it!" I cut in.

"They wouldn't know it. Did you know that you were being forced to marry that poor young prince of yours?"

"I wasn't forced. I was persuaded."

"We won't argue the point! Anyhow, the subject doesn't press. The scheme I have in my head for you to launch Fane on the social sea—the *sea* in every sense of the word, as you'll learn by and by—can't come off till you're out of your deepest mourning. I'll find you a quieter line of goods than the Fane-Leigh business to begin on, if you agree to take up brightening. The question is, *do* you agree?"

"I do," I said more earnestly than I had said "I will" as I stood at Paolo's side in church. For life hadn't been very earnest then. Now it was.

"Good!" exclaimed Mrs. Carstairs.

"Then the next thing is to furnish you a charming flat in the same house with us. You must have a background."

"You forget I haven't a farthing!" I fiercely reminded her. "But Mr. Carstairs won't forget! I've made him too much trouble. The best brightening won't run to *half* a background in Berkeley Square."

"Wait," Mrs. Carstairs calmed me. "I haven't finished the whole proposition yet. In America when we run up a skyscraper we don't begin at the bottom in any old, commonplace way. We stick a few steel girders into the earth; then we start at the top and work down. That's what I've been doing with my plan. It's perfect. Only you've got to support it with something."

"What is it you're trying to break to me?" I demanded.

The dear old lady swallowed heavily.

It must be something pretty awful if it frightened *her*!

"You like Roger Fane?" she began.

"Yes, I admire him. He's handsome and interesting, though, for my taste, a little too mysterious and tragic to live with."

"He's not mysterious at all," she defended Fane. "His tragedy—for there was a tragedy—is no secret in America. I often met him before the war, when I ran over to pay visits in New York, though he was far from being at the social top. But at the moment I've no more to say about Roger Fane. I've been using him for a handle to brandish a friend of his in front of your eyes."

My blood grew hot.

"Not the ex-cowboy?"

"That's no way to speak of Sir James Courtenaye."

"Then *he's* what you want to break to me!"

"I want—I mean, I'm *requested*—to inform you of a way he proposes out of the woods for you—at least, the darkest part of the woods."

"I told Mr. Carstairs I'd see James Courtenaye *dead* rather than——"

"This is a different affair entirely. You must listen, my dear, unless I'm to wash my hands of you. What I have to describe is the foundation for your career."

I swallowed some more of grandmother's expressions which occurred to me, and I listened.

Sir James Courtenaye's second proposition was not an offer of charity. He suggested that I let Courtenaye Abbey to him for a term of years, for the sum of one thousand five hundred pounds a year, the first three years to be paid in advance. This clause, Mrs. Carstairs hinted, would enable me to dole out crumbs here and there for the quieting of grandmother's creditors. Sir James' intention was not to use the Abbey as a residence, but to make of it a show place for the public during the term of

his lease. In order to do this, the hall must be restored and the once-famous gardens beautified. This expense he would undertake, carrying the work quickly to completion, and would reimburse himself by means of the fees, a shilling a head, charged for viewing the place and its historic treasures.

When I had heard all this, I hesitated as to what to answer, thinking of grandmother and wondering what she would have said had she been in my shoes. But as this thought flitted into my mind it was followed by another. One of grandmother's few old-fashioned fads was her style of shoe—pattern 1875. The shoes I stood in, at that moment, were pattern 1919. In my shoes grandmother would simply scream! And I wouldn't be at my best in hers. This was the parable which common sense put to me; and Mrs. Carstairs cleverly offering no word of advice, I paused no longer than five minutes before I snapped out:

"Yes! The horrid brute can have the darling place till I get rich."

"How sweet of you to consent so graciously, darling!" purred Mrs. Carstairs. Then we both laughed. After which I fell into her arms and cried.

For fear I might change my mind, Mr. Carstairs got me to sign some dull-looking documents that very day; and the oddness of their being all ready to hand didn't strike me till the ink was dry.

"Henry had them prepared because he knew how sensible you are at heart—I mean at head," his wife explained. "Indeed, it is a compliment to your intelligence."

Anyhow, it gave me the wherewithal to throw sops to a whole zoo of Cerberuses, and still keep enough to take that flat in the Carstairs' house in Berkeley Square. Of course, to do all this meant leaving Italy for good and going back to England. But there was little to keep me in Rome. My whole in-

heritance from my husband-of-an-hour could be packed into a suit case! She-lagh and her snobs traveled with us. And as soon as they were demobilized, Roger Fane and James Courtenaye followed, if not us, at least in our direction.

I don't think that Aladdin's lamp builders "had anything on" Sir Jim, as he himself said, judging by the way the restorations simply flew. From what I heard of the sums he spent, it would take the shillings of all England and America as sightseers to reimburse him for his output. But, as Mr. Carstairs pointed out, that was *his* business!

Mine was, via Lucille's and Redfern's, to become a brightener. For the clock was ticking regularly now. I was no longer down and out. I was up and in. Elizabeth, Princess di Miramare, was spoiling for her first job.

CHAPTER III.

Looking back through my twenty-one and three-quarters years, I divide my life, up to date, into thunderbolts:

Thunderbolt one: Death of my father and mother.

Thunderbolt two: Ghost night at the Abbey.

Thunderbolt three: My marriage to Paolo di Miramare.

Thunderbolt four: The "double blow."

Thunderbolt five: Beggary!

Which brings me along the road to thunderbolt six.

Mrs. Percy-Hogge was, and is, exactly what you would think from her name, which is why I don't care to dwell at length on the few months I spent brightening her at Bath. It was bad enough living them!

Whole bunches of grandmother's friends were in the Bath zone just then, which is why I chose it; and they were so touched by my widow's weeds that they were charming to Mrs. P.-H., in

order to please me. As most of them, though stuffy, were titled, and there were two marchionesses and one duchess, the result for Mrs. Percy-Hogge was brilliant. She, who had never before known any one above a knight-ess, was in paradise. She had taken a fine old Georgian house, furnished from basement to attic by Mallet, and had launched invitations for a dinner party "to meet the Dowager-Duchess of Stoke" when thunderbolt six fell!

Naturally it fell on me, not her, as thunderbolts have no affinity for Hoggs. It fell in the shape of a telegram from Mrs. Carstairs.

Come London immediately for consultation. Terrible theft at Abbey. Barlows drugged and bound by burglars. Both prostrated. Affair serious. Let me know train. Will meet. Love.

CAROLINE CARSTAIRS.

I wired in return that I would catch the first train, and caught it. The old lady kept her word, also, and met me. Before her car had whirled us to Berkeley Square I had got the whole story out of her, which was well, as an ordeal awaited me.

I had been sent for in haste because the news of the burglary was not to leak into the papers until, as Mrs. Carstairs expressed it, "those most concerned had come to some sort of understanding."

"You see," she added, "this isn't an ordinary theft. There are wheels within wheels, and the insurance people will kick up a row rather than pay. That's why we must talk everything over—you and Sir James and Henry; and Henry is never quite complete without me, so I intend to be in the offing."

I knew she wouldn't stay there, but that was a detail!

The robbery had taken place the night before, and Sir James himself had been the one to discover it. Complication number one!

He was now a man of leisure, and,

instead of reopening his flat in town, had taken up quarters at Courtenaye Coombe to superintend the repairs at the Abbey. His ex-cowboy habits being energetic, he usually walked the two miles from the village and appeared on the scene ahead of the workmen.

This morning he arrived before seven o'clock and went, according to custom, to beg a cup of coffee from Mrs. Barlow. She and her husband occupied the bedroom and sitting room which had been the housekeeper's, but at that hour the two were invariably in the kitchen. Sir Jim let himself in with his key and marched straight to that part of the house. He was surprised to find the kitchen shutters closed and the range fireless. Suspecting something wrong, he went to the bedroom door and knocked. He got no answer; but a second, harder rap produced a muffled moan. The door was not locked. He opened it and was horrified at what he saw: Mrs. Barlow, on the bed, gagged and bound; her husband in the same condition, but lying on the floor; and the atmosphere of the closed room heavy with the fumes of ether.

It was Mrs. Barlow who had managed to answer the knock with a moan. Barlow was deeper under the spell of the drug than she, and, it appeared afterward, in a more serious condition.

The old couple had no story to tell, for they recalled nothing of what had happened. They had made the rounds of the house as usual at night, and had then gone to bed. Barlow did not wake from his stupor until the village doctor came to revive him with stimulants, and Mrs. Barlow's first gleam of consciousness was when she heard dimly Sir James knocking.

As soon as Sir Jim had attended to the sufferers he hurried out and sent one of the workmen, who had come, back to Courtenaye Coombe for the doctor and the village nurse. The moment

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Sir Jim was free, he set off on a voyage of discovery round the house, and soon learned that a big haul had been effected. The things taken were all small in size, but in value immense; and circumstantial evidence suggested that the thief or thieves knew precisely what they wanted as well as where to get it.

In the picture gallery a portrait of King Charles I., given by himself to a General Courtenaye of the day, had been cleverly cut out of its frame, also a sketch of the Long Water at Hampton Court, painted and signed by King Charles. The green drawing-room was deprived of its chief treasure, a quaint sampler embroidered by the hand of Queen Mary of Scots for her "faithful John Courtenaye." From the Chinese boudoir a Buddha of the Ming period was gone and a jewel box of marvelous red lacquer, presented by Li Hung Chang to my grandmother. The silver cabinet in the oak dining room had been broken open, and a teapot, sugar bowl, and cream jug given by Queen Anne to an ancestress were absent. The china cabinet in the same room was bared of a set of green-and-gold coffee cups presented by Napoleon I. to a French great-great grandmother of mine; and from the big dining hall adjoining a Gobelin panel woven for the Empress Josephine, after the wedding picture by David, had vanished.

A few *bibelots* were missing, also, here and there: snuff boxes of Beau Nash and Beau Brummel; miniatures, old paste brooches, and buckles reminiscent of Courtenaye beauties, and a fat watch that had belonged to George IV.

"All my pet things!" I mourned.

"Don't say that to any one except me," advised Mrs. Carstairs. "My dear, *bits of a letter torn into tiny pieces—a letter from you—were found in the Chinese room*, and the insurance people will be hatefully inquisitive!"

"You don't mean to insinuate that they'll suspect me?" I blazed at her.

"Not of stealing the things with your own hands. And if they did, you could easily prove an alibi, I suppose. Still, they're bound to follow up every clew, and bits of paper with your writing on them, apparently dropped by the thieves, do form a tempting clew. You can't help admitting it."

I did not admit it in the least, but at first glance I couldn't see where the "temptation" lay to steal one's own belongings. But Mrs. Carstairs soon made me see. Though the things were mine in a way, in another way they were not mine. Being heirlooms, I could not profit by them financially. Yet, if I should cause them to disappear, without being detected, I could receive the insurance money with one hand and rake in with the other a large bribe from some supposititious purchaser.

"On the contrary, why shouldn't our brave baronet be suspected of precisely the same fraud, and more of it?" I inquired. "If I could steal the things, so could he. If they're my pets, they may be his. And he was on the spot, with a lot of workmen in his pay! Surely such circumstantial evidence against him weighs more heavily in the scales than a mere scrap of paper against me? I've written Sir Jim once or twice, by the way, on business about the Abbey, since I've been in Bath. All he'd have to do would be to tear a letter up small enough, so it couldn't be pieced together and make sense—"

"Nobody's weighing anything in scales against either of you yet," soothed Mrs. Carstairs; "unless you're doing it against each other! But we don't know what may happen. That's why it seemed best for you and Sir James to come together and exchange blows—I mean, *views*—at once. He called my husband up by long-distance telephone, early this morning, told him

what had happened, and had a pow-wow on ways and means. They decided not to inform the police, but to save publicity and engage a private detective. In fact, Sir J asked Henry to send a good man to the Abbey by the quickest train. He went—the man, I mean; not Henry—and the head of his firm ought to arrive at our flat in a few minutes, now, to meet you and Sir James."

"Sir James! Even a galloping cowboy can't be in London and Devonshire at the same moment."

"Oh, I forgot to mention he must have traveled up by your train. I suppose you didn't see him?"

"I did not!"

"He was probably in a smoking carriage. Well, anyhow, he'll soon be with us."

"Stop the taxi!" I broke in, and stopped it myself by tapping on the window behind the chauffeur.

"Good heavens, what's the matter?" gasped my companion.

"Nothing. I want to inquire the name of that firm of private detectives Sir James Courtenaye got Mr. Carstairs to engage."

"Pemberton. You must have seen it advertised. But why stop the taxi to ask that?"

"I stopped the taxi to get out and let you run home alone, while I find another cab to take me to another detective. You see, I didn't want to go to the same firm."

"Isn't one firm of detectives enough at one time on one job?"

"It isn't one job. You're the shrewdest woman I know. You must see that James Courtenaye has engaged his detective to spy upon me, to dog my footsteps, to discover if I suddenly blossom out into untold magnificence on ill-got gains. I intend to turn the tables on him, and when I come back to your flat it will be in the company of my very own little detective."

Mrs. Carstairs broke into adjurations and arguments. According to her, I entirely misjudged my cousin's motives; and if I brought a detective it would be an insult. But I stopped her by explaining that my man would not give himself away. He would pose as a friend of mine. I would select a suitable person for the part. With that I jumped out of the taxi, and the dear old lady was too wise to stop me. She drove sadly home, and I went into the nearest shop which looked likely to own a directory. In that volume I found another firm of detectives with an equally celebrated name. I taxied to their office, explained something of my business, and picked out a person who might pass for a comrade of a socialist princess. He and I then repaired to Berkeley Square; and Sir James and the Pemberton person, also Mr. Carstairs, had not been waiting much more than half an hour when we arrived.

I don't know what my forty-fourth cousin four times removed thought about my dashing in with a strange Mr. Smith, who apparently had nothing to do with the case. And I didn't care. No, not even if he imagined the square-jawed, bulldog creature to be a choice specimen of my circle at Bath. In any case, my Mr. Smith was a vision compared with his Pemberton. As to Sir Jim, I had to acknowledge that he was far from insignificant in personality. If there were to be any battle of wits or manners between us, I couldn't afford to despise him.

When I had met him before I was too utterly overwhelmed to study or even to notice him much, except to see that he was a big, red-headed fellow who loomed unnaturally large when viewed against the light. Now I classified him as resembling a more-than-life-size statue, done in pale bronze, of a red Indian, or a soldier of ancient Rome. The only flaws in the statue were the red hair and the fiery eyes.

My Mr. Smith, as I have explained, wasn't posing as a detective, but he was engaged to stop, look, and listen for all he was worth and tell me his impressions afterward—just as, no doubt, the great Mr. Pemberton was to tell Sir James his.

We talked over the robbery in conclave; we amateurs suggesting theories, the professionals committing themselves to nothing so premature. The sole decision arrived at, and agreed to by all, was to keep the affair among ourselves for the present. This could be managed if only private detectives were employed and the police not brought into the case. When the meeting broke up and I was able to question Mr. Smith, I was disappointed in him. I had hoped and expected, having led up to it by hints, that he would say, "Sir James Courtenaye is in this." On the contrary, he tactlessly advised me to "put that idea out of my head. There was nothing in it." I hope he meant the idea, not the head!

"I should say, speaking in the air," he remarked, "that the caretakers are the guilty parties, or, at least, have had some hand in the business. Though, of course, I might change my mind if I were on the spot."

I assured him that any one possessed of a mind at all would change it at sight of dear old Barl and Barley. Nothing on earth would make me believe anything against them. Why, if they didn't have almost halos and wings Sir James and the insurance people would have objected to them as guardians. The very fact that they had been kept on, without a word of protest from any one when Courtenaye Abbey was let to Sir James, was, I argued, the best testimonials to the Barlows' character.

Nevertheless, my orders were that Mr. Smith should go to Devonshire and take a room at the Courtenaye Arms, dressed and painted to represent a landscape artist.

"The Abbey is to be opened to the public in a few days, in spite of the best small show things being lost," I reminded him. "You can see the Barlows and judge of them. But what is much more important, you'll also see Sir James Courtenaye, who lodges in the inn, and can judge of *him*. In my opinion, he has revenged himself for losing his suit to grab the Abbey and everything in it by taking what he could lay his hands on without being suspected."

"But you do suspect him!" said Mr. Smith.

"For that matter, so does he suspect me," I retorted.

"You think so," the detective amended.

"Don't you?"

"No, princess, I do not."

"What *do* you think, then? Or don't you think anything?"

"I do think something." He tried to justify his earning capacity.

"What, if I may ask?"

"Of course you may ask, princess," he replied. "But it's too early, yet, for me to answer your question in fairness to myself. About the theft I have not formed a firm theory, but I have about Sir James Courtenaye. I would not have ventured even to mention it, however, if you had not drawn me out, for it is but indirectly concerned with the case."

"Directly or indirectly, I wish to know it," I insisted. "And as you're in my employ, I think I have the right."

"Very well, madam, you shall know it—later," he said.

CHAPTER IV.

I went back to Bath and Mrs. Percy-Hogge; but I no longer felt that I was enjoying a rest cure. Right or wrong, I had the impression of being watched. I was sure that Sir James Courtenaye had put detectives on my track, hoping I might be caught communicating with

my hired bravos or the wicked receiver of my stolen goods. In other days, when a man stared or turned to gaze after me, I had attributed the attention to my looks; now I jumped to the conviction that he was a detective. And, in fact, I began to jump at anything.

It was vain for Mrs. Carstairs—who ran down to Bath after I'd written her a wild letter—to guarantee that even an enemy—which she vowed Sir James wasn't!—could rake up no shred of evidence against me. She couldn't deny that, materially speaking, it *would* be a "good haul" for me to sell the heirlooms and obtain, also, the insurance money. But then, I hadn't done it and nobody could accuse me of doing it, because no one knew the things were gone. Oh, well, yes! Some detectives knew, and the poor old Barlows had bitter cause to know. A few others, too, including Sir James Courtenaye. But none of them counted, because none of them would talk.

Mrs. Carstairs said it was absurd of me to imagine that Sir James was having me watched. But imagination and not advice had the upper hand of my nerves, and, seeing this, she prescribed a change of air.

"I meant Mrs. Percy-Hogge only for a stop-gap," she explained. "You've squeezed her into society now; and, for yourself, you've come to the time when you can lighten your mourning. I've waited for that before starting you on your new job. You'll go what my cook calls 'balmy on the crumpe' if you keep fancying every queer human being you meet in Milsom Street is a detective on your track. The best thing for you is not to have a track! And the way to manage that is to be at *sea*."

I was at sea, figuratively, until Mrs. Carstairs explained more. She recalled to my mind what she had said in our first chat about my career: how she had suggested my "taking the helm" to steer Roger Fane into the social sea.

"I think I mentioned then that I referred to the sea in the literal sense of the word," she went on. "I promised to tell you what I meant when the right moment came, and now it has come. I haven't been idle, meanwhile, I assure you, for I like Roger Fane as much as you like Shelagh Leigh. And between us two we'll marry them over the Pollens' snobby heads."

In short, Mr. Carstairs had a client who had a yacht at Plymouth. The client's name was Lord Verrington. The yacht's name was *Naiad*, and Lord Verrington wished to rent her for an absurdly large sum. Roger Fane didn't mind paying this sum. It was the right time of year for a yachting trip. If I would lend *éclat* to such a trip by virtue of my social position, the Pollens would permit their precious Shelagh to go. Mr. Pollen, whom grandmother had refused to know, would even join the party himself. Indeed, no one would refuse if asked by me, and the Pollens would be so dazzled by Roger Fane's sudden social success that their consent to the engagement was a foregone conclusion.

I snapped at the chance of escape. To be sure, it was a temporary escape, as the guests were invited for a week only; but lots of things may happen in a week. Why look beyond seven perfectly good days? Besides, I was to be given a huge "bonus" for my services; enough to pay the rent of my expensive flat for a year. But I wasn't entirely selfish in accepting. I've never half described to you the odd, reserved charm of that mysterious millionaire, Roger Fane, whose one fault was his close friendship with Sir James Courtenaye. And for his sake, as well as for dear little Shelagh's, I would gladly have done all I could to bring the two together.

Knowing that titles impressed the Pollens, I secured several: one earl with countess attached, legally, at all events;

a pretty sister of the latter; a bachelor marquis; and ditto viscount. These, with Shelagh, myself, Roger Fane, and Mr. Pollen, would constitute the party, should all accept.

They all did, partly for me, perhaps, and partly for each other, but largely from curiosity, as the *Naiad* had the reputation of being the most luxuriously appointed small steam yacht in British waters. Also, Roger had secured a famous Frenchman as chef. Altogether, the prospect offered attractions.

The start was to be made from Plymouth on a summer afternoon. We were to cruise along the coast and eventually make for Jersey and Guernsey, where none of the party had ever been. My things were packed, and I was ready to take a morning train for Plymouth—a train by which all of us in town would travel—when a letter arrived for me. It was from Mrs. Barlow, announcing the sudden death of her husband from heart failure. He had never recovered from the shock of the robbery or the heavy dose of ether which the thieves had administered. And this, Barley added, as if in reproach, was not all Barlow had been forced to endure. It had been a cruel blow to find himself supplanted as guardian of the Abbey. The excuse for thus superseding him and his wife was, of course, the state of their health after the ordeal through which they had passed. Nevertheless, Barlow felt, said his wife, that they were no longer trusted. They had loved the lodge, which was home to them in old days; but they had been promoted from lodge keeping to caretaking, and it was humiliating to be sent back while strangers usurped their place at the Abbey. This grief, in Barley's opinion, had killed her husband. As for her, she would follow him into the grave were it not for the loving care of Barlow's twin nephews from Australia. They were with her now, and would take her to the

old family home close to Dudworth Cove, which they had bought back from the late owner. Barlow's body would go with them, and be buried in the graveyard where generations of Barlows slept.

It was a real sorrow to hear of the old man's death and to know that I was blamed for heartlessness by Barley. Of course, I had nothing to do with the affair. The Barlows were not suspected, and had, in truth, been removed for their own health's sake to the lodge, where their possessions were. The new caretakers had been engaged by Sir James in consultation, I believed, with the insurance people, and my secret conviction was that they had been supplied by Pemberton's agency of private detectives. My impulse was to rush to the Abbey and comfort Mrs. Barlow, even at the risk of meeting my tenant engaged in the same task. But to do this would have meant delaying the trip and disappointing every one, most of all Shelagh and Roger Fane; so, advised by Mrs. Carstairs, I sent a telegram, instead, picked up Shelagh and her uncle, and took the Plymouth train. This was the easier to do because the wonderful old lady offered to go herself to the Abbey on a mission of consolation. She promised to send a telegram to our first port, saying how Barley was and everything else I wished to know.

Shelagh was so happy, so excited, that I was glad I'd listened to reason and kept the tryst. Never had I seen her as pretty as she looked on that journey to Devon, her eyes blue stars, her cheeks pink roses. But, when the skies began to darken, her eyes darkened, too. Had she been a barometer, she could not have responded more sensitively to the storm; for a storm we had, cats and dogs pelting down on the roof of the train.

"I was sure something horrid would happen!" she whispered. "It was too

good to be true that Roger and I should have a whole heavenly week together on board a yacht. Now we shall have to wait until the weather clears, or else be seasick. I don't know which is worse!"

Roger met us, in torrents of rain and gusts of wind, at Plymouth. But things were not as black as they looked. He had engaged rooms for every one and a private salon for us all at the best hotel. We would stay the night and have a dance, with a band of our own. By the next day the sea would have calmed down enough to please the worst of sailors, and we would start. Perhaps we could even get off in the morning.

This prophecy was rather too optimistic, for we didn't get off till afternoon; but by that time the water was flat as a floor, and one was tempted to forget there had ever been a storm. We were not to forget it for long, alas!

By four-thirty the day after the downpour, we had all come on board the lovely *Naiad*, had "settled" into our cabins, and were on deck—the girls in white serge or linen, the men in flannels—ready for tea.

If it had arrived, and we had been looking into our teacups instead of at the seascape, the whole of Roger Fane's and Shelagh's life might have been different; mine, too, perhaps! But as it was, Shelagh and Roger were leaning on the rail together, and her gaze was fixed upon the blue water, because, somehow, she couldn't meet Roger's just then. What he had said to her I don't know; but more to avoid giving an answer than because she was wildly interested, the girl exclaimed:

"What can that dark thing be, drifting and bobbing up and down in the waves? I suppose it couldn't be a dead shark?"

"Hardly, in these waters," said Roger Fane. "Besides, a dead shark floats wrong side up, and his wrong side is white. This thing looks black."

In ordinary circumstances I wouldn't have broken in on a tête-à-tête, but others were extricating themselves from their deck chairs, so I thought there was no harm in my being the first.

"More like a coffin than a shark," I said.

At that, the whole party hurled itself in our direction, and the nearer the *Naiad* brought us to the floating object, the more like a coffin it became to our eyes. At last it was so much like one that Roger decided to stop the yacht and examine the thing, which might even be an odd-shaped small boat overturned. He went off, therefore, to speak with the captain.

Almost before we'd thought the order given, the *Naiad* slowed down and came to rest like a great "Lohengrin" swan in the clear azure wavelets. A boat was quickly lowered, and we saw that Roger himself accompanied the two rowers.

A few moments before he had looked so happy, so at peace with the world, that the tragic shadow in his eyes had actually vanished. His whole expression and bearing had been different, and he had seemed years younger, almost boyish, in his dark, shy, reserved way.

"If he's superstitious, this will seem a bad omen," I thought. "That is, if the thing does turn out to be a coffin."

None of us remembered the tea we'd been pining for, though a white-clad steward was hovering with trays of cakes, cream, and strawberries. We could do nothing except hang over the rail and watch the *Naiad's* boat. We saw it reach the thing, in whose neighborhood it paused with lifted oars, while a discussion went on between Roger and the rowers. Apparently they argued, with due respect, against the carrying out of some order or suggestion. He was not a man to be disobeyed, however. After a moment or two the work of taking the black thing in tow was begun.

We were very near now, and could see plainly all that went on. Coffin or not, the mysterious object was a long, narrow box of some sort—the men's reluctance to pick it up proved pretty well *what* sort, to my mind—and, curiously enough, a rope was tied round it. There appeared to be a lump of knots on top and a loose end trailing like seaweed, which made the task of taking the derelict in tow an easy one.

"Is it a coffin or a treasure chest?" girls and men eagerly called down to Roger. Every one screamed some question except Shelagh and me. We were silent, and Shelagh's color had faded. She edged closer to me, until our shoulders touched. Hers felt cold to my warm flesh.

"Why, you're shivering, dear!" I said. "You're not *afraid* of that wretched thing, whatever it is?"

"We both know what it is without telling, don't we?" she replied in a half whisper. "I'm not afraid of it, of course. But it's awful that we should come across a coffin floating in the sea on our first day out. I feel as if it meant bad luck for us, Roger and me. How can they all squeal and chatter so? I suppose Roger is bound to bring the dreadful thing on board. It wouldn't be decent not to. But I wish he needn't."

I rather wished the same, partly because I knew how superstitious sailors were about such matters, and how they would hate to have a coffin—presumably containing a dead body—on board the *Naiad*. It really wasn't a gay yachting companion! However, I tried to cheer Shelagh.

All the men frankly desired to see the *trouvaille* at close quarters, and most of the women wanted a peep, though they weren't brutally open about it. If there had been any doubt, it would have vanished as the thing was being hauled on board by grave-faced, suddenly sullen sailors. It was a "sure-enough"

coffin, and, it seemed, an unusually large one!

It had to be placed on deck, for the moment, but Roger had the dark shape instantly covered with tarpaulins. An appeal from his clouded eyes made me suggest adjourning indoors for tea.

"Let's not talk any more about the business!" Roger exclaimed, when Shelagh's uncle seemed inclined to mix the subject with tea. "I wish it hadn't happened, as the men are foolishly upset. But it can't be helped, and we must do our best. The—er—it shan't stop on deck. That would be to keep Jonah under our eyes. I've thought of a place where we can all ignore it till tomorrow, when we'll land it, as early as we can, at St. Heliers. I'm afraid the local authorities will want to tie us up in a lot of red tape. But the worst will be to catechize us as if we were witnesses in court. Meanwhile, let's forget the whole affair."

"Right-o!" promptly exclaimed all three of the younger guests; but Mr. Pollen was not thus to be deprived of his morbid morsel.

"Certainly," he agreed. "But before the subject is shelved, *where* is the 'place' you speak of? I mean, where is the coffin to rest throughout the night?"

Roger gave a grim laugh and looked obstinate.

"I'll tell you this much," he said, "none of you'll have it for a neighbor, so none of you need worry."

After that, even Mr. Pollen could not persist. We disposed of an enormous tea, after the excitement, and then some of us played bridge. When we separated, however, to pace the deck, two by two, for a "constitutional" before dinner, one could see by the absorbed expression on faces and guess by the low-toned voices what each pair discussed.

My companion, Lord Glencathra, thought that somebody must have died

on some ship and been thrown overboard. But I argued that this could hardly be, because, surely, bodies buried at sea were not put into coffins, were they? I had heard that the custom was to sew them up in sailcloth or something and weight them well. Besides, there was the broken rope tied round the coffin, which seemed to show that it had been tethered and got loose in the storm, perhaps. How did Lord Glencathra account for that fact? He couldn't account for it. And neither could any one else.

CHAPTER V.

I did all I could to help make dinner a lively meal, and with iced Pommery of a particularly good year as my aide-camp, superficially, at least, I succeeded. But whenever there was an instant's lull in the conversation I felt that every one was asking himself or herself, "*Where is the coffin?*"

The plan had been to have a little moonlight fox-trotting and jazzing on deck, but with that black thing hidden somewhere on board, we confined ourselves to more bridge and star gazing, according to taste. I, as professional brightener, nobly kept Mr. Pollen out of everybody's way by annexing him for a stroll. This deserved the name of a double brightening act, for I brightened the lives of his fellow guests by saving them from him, and I brightened his by encouraging him to talk of well-connected people.

"Who *was* she before she married Lord Thingumbob?" or, "Yes, she was a Miss So-and-so, a cousin of the Duke of Dinkum," might have been heard issuing sapiently from our lips had any one been mentally destitute enough to eavesdrop. But I had my reward. Dear little Shelagh and Roger Fane seemed to have cheered each other. I left them standing together, elbows on the rail, as they had been before the af-

fair of the afternoon. The moonlight was shining full upon Shelagh's bright hair and frail white face as she looked up, eager-eyed, at Roger, and *he* looked—at least, his *back* looked—as if there was nobody on land or sea except one girl.

Having lured Mr. Pollen to make a fourth at a bridge table where the players were too polite to kill him, I ventured to vanish. There being no one on board with whom I wished to flirt, my one desire after two hard hours of brightening was to curl up in my cabin with a nice book. I quite looked forward to the moment for shutting myself cozily in, for the cabin was a delicious pink-and-white nest, the biggest on board, as a tribute to my princess-hood.

Hardly had I opened the door, however, when the bubble of my dream broke. A very odd and repellent odor greeted me and seemed almost to push me back across the threshold. I held my ground, however, and sniffed with curiosity and disgust.

Somebody had been at my perfume, my expensive pet perfume made specially for me in Rome—one drop exquisite; two, oppressive—and must have spilled it. But, worse than that, the heavy fragrance was mingled with a horrid reek of stale brandy.

Anger flashed up in me like a match set to guncotton. Some impertinent person had sneaked into my stateroom and played a stupid practical joke. Or, if not that, one of the pleasantly trim, immaculate women—a cross between the stewardess and ladies'-maid type—engaged to hook up our frocks and make up our cabins, was secretly a confirmed *rotter*!

I switched on the light, shut the door smartly without locking it, and flung a furious glance around. The creature had actually dared to place a brandy bottle conspicuously upon my dressing table, among gold-handled brushes and

silver-gilt boxes; and as a crowning impertinence had left a common-looking tumbler beside the bottle, a quarter full of strong-smelling brown stuff. Close by lay my lovely crystal flask of "Campagna Violets," quite empty. I could get no more, and it had cost three pounds! I could hardly breathe in the room. Oh, evidently a stewardess must have gone stark mad, or else some practical joker had waited until the stewardesses were in bed to play the coup.

As I thought this, my eyes as well as my nostrils warned me of something strange about my pleasant quarters. The rose-colored silk curtains which, when I went to dinner, had been gracefully looped back at the head and foot of my pretty white-and-pink bed—a real bed, not a mere berth—were now closely drawn with a secretive air. This made me imagine that it was a practical joke I had to deal with, and my fancy flew to all sorts of weird surprises, any one of which I might find hidden behind the draperies.

I hope and trust that I have a sense of humor, and I can laugh at a jest against myself as well as any woman, perhaps better than most. But to-night I was in no mood to laugh at any kind of jest, and I wondered how anybody on board had possessed the heart, not to mention the cheek, to perpetrate one after the shock we had all experienced. Besides, I couldn't think of a person likely to play a trick on me. Certainly my host wouldn't. Shelagh, my best and most intimate friend, was far too gentle and sensitive-minded for anything of the kind. And none of the other guests were of the noisy, bounding sort who will take liberties even with quite distant acquaintances for fun.

All this ran through my mind quickly as a cinema cut on the screen, and it wasn't until I'd mentally passed in review the character of all my fellow guests that I summoned courage to pull

back the curtains which hid the bed. When I did do it, I gave them a quick jerk which slipped them sharply along the rod as far as they would go. And then I saw the last thing in the world I could possibly have pictured.

A woman, fully dressed, was stretched out on the pink silk coverlet, lying fast asleep, her head deep sunk in the embroidered down pillow, her face turned to me as I looked.

It was all I could do to keep back a cry, for this was no woman I had seen on board, not even a drunken or sleepwalking stewardess. Yet her face was not strange to me. That was the most horrible, the most mysterious part! There was no mistake. The face was one impossible to forget. And as I stared at it, almost believing that I dreamed, another scene rose between my eyes and the dainty little cabin of the *Naiad*.

It also was a scene in a dream. I knew it was a dream, but it was dreadful and torturingly vivid. I was a prisoner on a submarine, in war time, and signals from my own old home, Courtenaye Abbey, flashed into my face. They flashed so brightly that they set me on fire. I wakened from the nightmare with a start. A strong light dazzled my eyes and, blazing into my face, lit up another face as well. Just for an instant I saw it; then the electric ray that revealed it died into dead darkness. But on my retina was photographed the face, in a pale, illumined circle.

A second sufficed to bring back to my brain this old dream and the waking reality which followed that night at the Abbey, the night Shelagh and I called "the spook night." For here, in my cabin on the yacht *Naiad*, and on the crushed pillow of my bed, was that face.

As I realized this, without benefit of any doubt, a faint sickness swept over me. It was partly horror of the past, partly physical disgust of the brandy reek, hanging low like an unseen can-

opy over the bed, and partly cold fear of a terrifying presence.

There she lay, sunk in drugged and drunken sleep, the woman of mystery in whose existence no one but Shelagh and I had ever quite believed—the woman who had visited us in our sleep that night at the Abbey and who, almost certainly, had fired the Abbey, hoping that we and the Barlows might suffocate in our beds.

The face was just the same as it had been then, "beautiful and hideous, like Medusa." Only now it was older and, though still beautiful, somehow it looked *ravaged*. The hair still glowed with the vivid auburn color which I had thought unreal looking, but now it was tumbled and unkempt. Loose locks strayed over the dainty pillows, and at the bottom of the bed, pushed tightly against the footboard by a pair of untidy, high-heeled shoes, was a dusty black toque, half covered with a thick motor veil of gray chiffon. There was a gray cloak there, too, in a tumbled mass on the pink coverlet, and a pair of soiled gloves. Everything about the sleeper was sordid, dirty, and repulsive, a shuddering contrast to the exquisite freshness of the bed and room—everything, that is, except the face. Its half-wrecked beauty was still supreme, and even in the ruin drink or drugs had wrought, it still forced admiration.

"A stowaway here in my cabin on board Roger Fane's yacht!" I said the words slowly in my mind, not with my tongue. Not a sound, not the faintest whisper, passed my lips. Yet suddenly the long, dark lashes on the bruised-looking lids began to quiver. It was as if my *thought* had shaken the woman by the shoulder and roused what was left of her soul.

I should have liked to dash out of the room and, with a shriek, bring every one on board to my room. But I did not. I stood quite still and concentrated my gaze, as before, on those

trembling blue eyelids. Something inside me seemed to say, "Don't be a coward, Elizabeth Courtenaye!" It was exactly like grandmother's voice. I had a conviction that *she* wanted me to see this thing through as a Courtenaye ought to, shirking no responsibility and solving the whole mystery of past and present without bleating for help!

The fringed lids parted, shut, quivered again, and flashed wide open. A pair of pale eyes stared into mine—wicked eyes, cruel eyes, green as a cat's. Like a cat, too, she gathered herself together as if for a spring. Her muscles rippled and jerked. She sat up, and, in chilled surprise, I thought I saw recognition in her gaze.

CHAPTER VI.

"Oh, you've come at last!" she rasped in a harsh, throaty voice roughened by drink. "I know you. I —"

"And I know you!" I cut her short, to show that I was not cowed.

Sitting up in bed, hugging her knees, she started at my words so that the springs shook. Whatever it was she had meant to say, she forgot it for the moment and challenged me.

"That's a lie!" she snapped. "You don't know me. You don't know me yet; but you soon will!"

"I've known you since you came into my room at Courtenaye Abbey the night you tried to burn down the house," I said. "You were spying then. Heaven knows all the harm you may have done. I don't know whom you're spying on now. But you can't frighten me again! The war's over, but I'll have you arrested for what you did when it was on."

The woman scowled and laughed, a hateful combination that made her more Medusalike than ever. I really felt as if she might turn me to stone, but I wouldn't let her guess!

"Pooh!" she said, showing tobacco-

stained teeth. "You won't want to arrest me when you hear who I am, Lady Shelagh Leigh!"

"Lady Shelagh Leigh!" It was on my lips to cry "I'm not Shelagh Leigh!" but I stopped in time. The less I let her find out about me, and the more I could find out about her before rousing the yacht, the better. I said not a word, but waited for her to go on, which she did in a few seconds.

"That makes you sit up, doesn't it?" she sneered. "That hits you where you *live*! Why did you think I chose your cabin? I didn't select it by chance. I confess I was taken back at your remembering me. I thought I hadn't given you time for much study of my features. But it doesn't matter. You can't do anything. I'll soon prove that! But I had a good look at you one night at your friend's old Devonshire rat trap. I knew who you both were. It was easy to find out! And the other day when I heard that Lady Shelagh Leigh was likely to marry Roger Fane, I said to myself, 'Gosh! One of the girls I saw at that darned old Abbey!'"

"Oh, you said *that* to yourself!" I echoed. And though my knees felt weak, I kept to my feet, because to stand towering above the shabby figure seemed to give me a moral as well as physical advantage. "How did you know, pray, which girl I was?"

"I knew, 'pray,'" she mocked, "because you've got the best room on this yacht. Roger'd be sure to give that to his best girl. Which is how I'm sure you're not Elizabeth Courtenaye."

"How clever you are!" I said.

"Yes, I'm clever when I'm not a fool. Don't think, anyhow, that you can beat me in a battle of brains. I've come on board this boat to succeed, and I *will* succeed in one of two ways, I don't care a hang which. But nothing on God's earth can hold me back from one or the other, least of all, *you*. Why, you can ask any question you please,

and I'll answer. I'll tell the truth, too, for the more I say and the more you're shocked, the more helpless you are—do you see?"

"No, I don't see." I drew her on.

"Don't you guess yet who I am?"

"I've guessed what you *were*—a military spy."

"That's ancient history. One must live and one must have money, plenty of money. I must! And I've had it. But it's gone from me, like most things. Now I must have more, a lot more, or else I must die. I don't care which. But *others* will care. *I'll make them!*"

Looking at her, I doubted if she had the power, though she must have had it in her lost days of gorgeous youth. But again I remained silent. I saw that she was leading up to something in particular, and I let her go on.

"You're not much of a guesser," she said, "so I'll introduce myself. Lady-who-thinks-she's-going-to-marry-Roger Fane, let me make known to you the lady who *has* married him—Mrs. Fane, née Linda Lehman. You're nothing in looks, by the by, to what I was at your age. *Nothing!*"

If my knees had been weak, they now felt as if struck with a mallet! She might be lying, but something within me was horribly sure that she spoke the truth. I never heard full details of Roger Fane's "tragedy," but Mrs. Carstairs had dropped a few hints which, without asking questions, I'd patched together. I had gleaned that when still quite a boy he'd married an actress much older than himself, and that till her sudden and violent death after many years, eight or ten at least, his life had been a martyrdom. How the woman contrived to be alive instead of dead I couldn't see, but such things actually happened to people one didn't know! The worst of it was that I did know Roger Fane and liked him. Besides, I loved Shelagh, whose happiness was bound up with Roger's. It seemed as

if I couldn't bear to have those two torn apart by this cruel creature, this drunkard, this intruder! Yet what could I do?

At the moment I could think of nothing useful, because, if she were Roger's wife, her boast was justified; for his sake and Shelagh's she couldn't be handed over to the police to answer for any political crime I might prove against her, or even for trying to burn down the Abbey. Oh, this business was beyond what I bargained for when I engaged to "brighten" the trip on board the *Naiad*! Still, all the spirit in me rallied to work for Roger Fane, even to work out his salvation if that could be. And I was glad I'd let the woman believe I was Shelagh Leigh.

"Roger's wife died five years ago, just before the war began," I said. "She was killed in a railway accident, an awful one, where she and a company of actors were all burned to death."

The creature laughed hilariously.

"Have you never been to a movie show and seen how easy it is to die that way, to be dead to those you're tired of and alive in some other part of this old world where you think there's more fun to be got? It's been done on the screen lots of times—and off it, too. I was sick to death of Roger. I'd never have married a stick like him, always preaching, if I hadn't been down and out. When I met him it was in a beastly one-horse town where I was stranded. The show had chucked me, gone off and left the *plantée la*! I was sick—too big a dose of dope, if you want to know. But Roger didn't know, you can bet. Not then! I took jolly good care to toe the mark till he'd married me all right."

She interrupted her narrative with a deep-drawn sigh. A few seconds later she went on:

"He was a sucker! I suppose he was

twenty-two and over, but Peter Pan wasn't in it with him in some ways. He kept me off the stage and tried to keep me off everything else worth doing for five years. Then I left him, for my health and looks had come back in the dull time, and I got a fair part in a play just going on tour. There I met a man from my own country—oh, don't be encouraged to hope!—I never gave Roger any cause to divorce me, and even if I had, I'd have done it so he couldn't prove a thing!

"Well, this man had a scheme. He wanted me to go with him. I didn't quite see my way at first, though there was big money in it; so he left us before the accident. When I found myself alive and kicking after that, though, I saw my chance. I left a ring and a few little things that would identify me with a woman that was killed, and I lit out. It was in the dead of night, so luck was on my side for once. I wrote my friend, and it wasn't long before we were at work for his government. The Abbey affair was after he'd got out of England. He was a sailor, and before long was given command of a big new submarine. If it hadn't been for the row you and your friend kicked up, we might have brought off one of the big stunts of the war. But your darned petty police rooked the thing after I'd been hiding in your old rat warren for months, and everything was working just right. I wish to goodness the whole house had burned that time, and I did wish *you'd* burned with it! But I don't know if to-night isn't going to pay me and you just as well. There's a lot owing from you to me. I haven't told you all yet. My friend's submarine got caught the night the police squealed, and he went down with her. If I hadn't failed him with the signals, he might be alive now."

"As you are so confidential, do tell me how you got into the Abbey and where you hid," I flung at her.

She shook her dyed and tousled head. "That's where I draw the line," she said. "I've told you what I have to please myself, not you. You can't profit by a word I've said. That's where my fun comes in! If I told you about the Abbey, you might profit somehow, or your friend, the Courtenaye girl, would. And I want to punish her, too, for that night."

I shrugged my shoulders.

"Perhaps you won't care to tell me, then, how you got on board the *Naiad*?"

"I don't mind telling you that," she returned. "I went out of England after the Abbey affair; friends got me away, and I worked in New York till things got too hot. Then I came over as a reconstruction worker, got into France, and stopped there till the other day. I'd be there still, perhaps, if I hadn't picked up a weekly London rag that lives on gossip and seen a paragraph about a 'rumored engagement.' You can guess *whose* it was. And it called Roger—my Roger, mind you!—a 'millionaire.' He never was poor in my day. He'd made a lucky strike, before we met, with an invention. I said to myself, 'Linda, my girl, it would be tempting Providence to lie still, and let another woman share his luck.'

"So I started as soon as I could, but just missed him.

"If it hadn't been for that bally storm, I shouldn't have caught you up! As it was, before you came on board this afternoon I presented myself with the card of a London newspaper and an old card of Roger's which was among a few things of his I'd kept for emergencies. I can copy his handwriting well enough to write a few words and not be suspected except by an intimate friend of his, so I scribbled on the card an order to view the yacht. I got on board all right and wandered about with a notebook. I soon found the right

place to hide, in the storeroom, behind some barrels.

"But I had to make every one who'd seen me think I'd gone back on shore. That was easy! I said to a sailor fellow by the gangplank that I was going, and said I'd mislaid an envelope with a tip for him and another man in it. I thought I'd left it on a table in the dining saloon, and he'd better look for it or it might be picked up by somebody else. He went before I could say 'knife!' and the envelope really was there, so he didn't have to hurry back. Two minutes later I was in the storeroom, and no one the wiser. Heavens, but I got the jumps waiting for the stewardesses to be safe in bed before I could creep out to pay your cabin a call!"

"So, to cure the 'jumps' you annexed a whole bottle of brandy," I said.

"I did—for that and another reason you may find out. But I'm hanged if you're not a cool hand for a young girl who has just heard her lover's a married man! I thought by this time you'd be in hysterics."

"Girls of my generation don't have hysterics," I deliberately taunted her. By the dyed hair and vestiges of rouge and powder which streaked the battered face I guessed that a fling at her age would sting like a poisoned dart. I wanted to rouse the woman's temper. If she lost her head, she might show her hand!

"You'll have worse than hysterics, you fool, before I finish," she flung back. "I'm going to make Roger Fane acknowledge me as his wife and give me all I want in life—money and motor cars and pearls and a position in society. I'm tired of being a free lance."

"He won't do it!" I said.

"He'll have to, when he hears what will happen if he doesn't. If I can't live a life worth living, I'll die. Roger

Fane will go off his yacht under arrest as my murderer."

"You deserve that he should kill you, but he will not," I assured her.

"He'll hang for killing me, anyhow. You see, the more motive he has to destroy me, the more impossible for him or you to prove his innocence. Do you think I'd have told you all this if any one would believe such a cock-and-bull story as it would sound to a jury? But I've finished now. I've said what I came to say. Now I'm ready to act. Do you want a row, or will you go quietly to the door of Roger's cabin—he must be there by this time—and tell him that his wife, Linda Lehman, is waiting for him in your stateroom? *That'll fetch him!*"

I had no doubt it would. My only doubt was what to do! But if I refused, the woman was sure to keep her word and rouse the yacht by screams. That would be the worst thing possible for Shelagh and Roger. I decided to go and break to him the dreadful news with merciful swiftness.

If I could, I would have turned a key upon the creature, but the doors of the *Naiaid's* cabins were furnished only with bolts. My one hope that she would keep to my room was that she was still too drunk to move about safely, and that, despite her bluff, the best card she had was diplomacy with Roger.

Quietly I closed the door and tiptoed to his, three staterooms distant from mine. My tap was so light that, if he had gone to sleep, I should have had to knock again. But he opened the door at once. He was fully dressed and had a book in his hand.

"Something has happened," I whispered in answer to his amazed look. "Let me come in and explain. I can't talk out here."

He stood aside in silence, and I stepped in. Then I motioned to him to shut the door quickly.

CHAPTER VII.

This was the first time I'd seen Roger's cabin, and I had no eyes now for its charm of decoration, but I saw that it was large and divided by a curtained arch into a bedroom and a tiny, yet complete, study fitted with bookshelves and a desk.

"You're pale as death!" He lowered his voice cautiously. "Sit down in this easy-chair."

"Now what is it?" he asked, bending over me. And as I began to stammer out my story, for a few seconds I forgot my fear of being followed. Our backs were turned to the door. But I had not got far in the tale when I felt that *she* had come into the room. I glanced over my shoulder and saw her, a shabby, sinister figure, hanging on to the curtain that draped the archway.

Roger's start and stifled exclamation proved that, whatever else she might be, the woman was no impostor.

"You devil!" he gasped.

"Your wife!" she retorted, with a mocking grimace.

"Hush!" I whispered. "For everybody's sake let's keep this quiet!"

"I'll be quiet for my own sake if he accepts my terms," said the woman. "If not, the whole yacht——"

"Be silent!" Roger commanded. "Princess, you'd better go now and leave me alone with her."

He was right. My presence would hinder rather than help. I saw the greenish eyes dart from his face to mine when he called me "Princess;" but she must have fancied it a pet name.

When I got back to my own quarters I noticed at once that the brandy bottle and the tumbler which had accompanied it were gone from my dressing table. Nor were they to be found in the cabin. The woman must have taken them to Roger's room and placed them somewhere before I saw her. "Disgusting!" I murmured, for my

thought was that the drunken creature had clung affectionately to the things. Even though I'd sharpened my wits to search all her motives, I failed over that simple act!

"Oh, poor Roger!" I said to myself. "And poor Shelagh!"

I sat miserably on the window seat, for the rumpled bed was now abhorrent to me, and wondered what would happen next. But I had not long to wait. A few moments passed—how many I don't know—and then the crystalline silence of the gliding *Naiad* was splintered by a scream.

"Scream" is the word one must use for a cry of pain or fear. Yet it isn't the right word for the sound which snatched me to my feet. It was not shrill, it was not loud. What might have ended in a shriek subsided to a choked breath, a gurgle. My heart's pounding seemed louder as I listened. My ears expected a following cry, but it did not come. Two or three doors gently opened, that was all. Again dead silence fell, and I felt in it that others listened, fearing to speak lest the sound had been no more than a moan in a dream.

Presently the doors closed again, each listener afraid of disturbing a neighbor for nothing. And even I, who knew the secret behind the silence, prayed that the choked scream might have come when it did as a mere coincidence. Some one might really have had a nightmare!

As time passed, I almost persuaded myself that this was so, and that, at worst, there would be no crime to mark this night with crimson on the calendar. But the next quarter hour was the deadest time I'd ever known. I felt like one entombed alive, praying to be liberated from a vault. Then, at last, when those who'd waked might have fallen asleep again, came a faint knock at my door.

I flew to slip back the bolt, and al-

most pulled Roger Fane into the room. One would not have believed a face so brown could bleach so white!

For an instant we stared into each other's eyes. When I could speak, I stammered a question, I don't know what, and I don't think he understood. But the spell broke.

"You heard?" he faltered.

"The cry! Yes. It was——"

"She's dead."

"Dead! You killed her?"

"My God, no! But if *you* think that, what will others think?"

"If you had killed her, you couldn't be blamed," I tried to encourage him. "Only——"

"Didn't she make some threat to you? I hoped she had. She told me——"

"Yes, there was something—I hardly remember what. It was like drunkenness. She said—I think, if you wouldn't take her back, you'd be arrested—as her murderer."

"That was it—her ultimatum. She must have been mad. I offered a big allowance, if she'd just go away and not make a scandal. I'd have to give up Shelagh, of course, but I wanted to save my poor little love from gossip. That devil would have no compromise. It should be all or nothing. I must swear to acknowledge her as my wife on board this yacht to-morrow morning, before Shelagh, before you all. If I wouldn't promise that, she'd kill herself, at once, in a way to throw the guilt on me. She'd do it in such a way that I couldn't clear myself or be cleared. I wouldn't promise, of course. I hoped, anyhow, that she was bluffing. But I didn't know her! When nothing would change me, she showed a tiny vial she had in her hand, and said she'd drink the stuff in it before I could touch her. It was prussic acid, she told me, and already she'd poured enough to kill ten men into a tumbler she'd stolen from my cabin on purpose. She'd mixed the poison with brandy from the

storeroom. Even if I threw the tumbler through the porthole, mine would be missing.

"Now will you promise?" she repeated. I couldn't, for I could not have kept my word. She looked at me a second. I saw in her eyes she was going to do the thing. I jumped at her, but I was too late. She nearly drained the vial. And she'd hardly flung it away before she was dead, with an awful, twisted face and that cry that died with her. If I hadn't caught her, she'd have fallen with a crash. This is the end of things for me."

"Oh, no, don't say that!" I begged.

"What else is there to say? There she lies, dead in my cabin. There's poison spilled on the floor, and the vial broken. No one but you will believe I didn't kill her—even Shelagh. Just because she made my past life horrible—and I had a chance of happiness—the temptation would be so great——"

"Let me think! Do let me think!" I persisted. "Surely there's a way out of the trap."

"I don't see one," said Roger. "Throwing a body overboard is the obvious thing. But it would be worse than——"

"Wait!" I cut him short. "I've thought of another thing—not obvious. But it's hard to do, and hateful. The only help I could lend is a hint. The rest would depend on yourself. If you were strong enough, brave enough, it might give you Shelagh."

"I'm strong enough for anything with the remotest hope of Shelagh, and, I trust, brave enough, too. Tell me your plan."

I had to draw a long breath before I could answer. I needed air!

"You're right," I said. "To give the body to the sea would make things worse. You couldn't be sure it would not be found and the woman traced by the police. If they discovered who she was—that she'd been your wife—you

would be suspected, even if nothing were proved through those who saw a veiled woman come on board."

"That's what I meant. Yet you must see that even with your testimony, my innocence can't be proved if the story of this night has to be told."

"I do see. You might not be proved guilty, but you'd be under a cloud. Shelagh would want to marry you. But she's very young, and easy to break as a butterfly. The Pollens——"

"I wouldn't accept such a sacrifice, even if they'd let her make it. Yet you speak of hope!"

"I do—a desperate hope! Can you open that coffin you brought on board to-day, take out whatever is in it—and——"

"My God!"

"I warned you the plan was terrible. I hardly thought you would——"

"I would—for Shelagh. But you don't understand. That coffin will be opened by the police at St. Heliers to-morrow, and——"

"I do understand. It's you who do not. Every one on board knows that the coffin was floating in the sea, that we came on it by accident. You could have had nothing to do with its being where it was. If you had, you wouldn't have taken it on board! The body found in that coffin to-morrow won't be associated with you. She must have altered horribly since old days. And she has changed her name many times. The initials on her linen won't be L. L. There'll be a nine days' wonder over the mystery. But you won't be concerned in it. As for what's in the coffin now, that can safely be given to the sea. Whatever it may be, and whenever or wherever it's found, it won't be connected with the name of Roger Fane."

"Oh, don't think I do not realize the full horror of the thing. I do! But between two evils one must choose the less, if it hurts no one. It seems to me

it is so with this. Why should Shelagh's life and yours be spoiled by a cruel woman, a criminal, whose last act was to try and ruin the man she'd injured, sinned against for years? As for the other, the unknown one, if the spirit can see, surely it would be glad to help in such a cause. What you would have to do, you'd do reverently. There must be tarpaulin on board or canvas coverings that wouldn't be looked for or missed. There must be a screw driver and things like that. The great danger is that if the coffin's in plain sight anywhere and a man on watch——"

"There's no danger of that kind. The coffin is in the bathroom adjoining my cabin."

"Then doesn't it seem that Fate bade you put it there?"

For a moment Roger covered his face with his hands. I saw him shudder. But he flung back his head and looked me in the eyes.

"I'll go on obeying Fate's orders," he said.

Without another word between us, he left me. The door shut, and I sat staring at it, as if I could see beyond.

I had spoken only the truth. There was no sin against living or dead in what I had urged Roger to do. Yet the bare thought of it was so grim that I felt like an up-to-date Lady Macbeth.

I had forgotten to beg that he would come back and tell of his success or failure. But I was sure he would come, sooner or later, whatever happened, and I sat quite still, waiting. I kept my eyes on the door to see the handle turn, or gazed at my little traveling clock to watch the dragging moments. I longed for news. Yet I was glad when time went on without a sign. The quick coming back of Roger would have meant that he had failed, that all hope was ended.

Twenty minutes, thirty, forty, fifty, passed, seeming endless. But when with the sixtieth minute came the faint

tap I awaited, down sank my heart. Roger could not have finished his double task in an hour!

I dashed to the door, and the light from my cabin showed the man's face, ashy pale. Yet I did not read despair on it.

Without a word I pulled him into the room, and only when the door was closed did I dare to whisper, "Well?"

CHAPTER VIII.

"There was no body in the coffin," Roger said.

"Empty?" I gasped.

"Not empty. No. There was something there. Will you come to my cabin and see what it was? Don't look terrified. There's nothing to frighten you. And, princess, the rest of the plan you gave me has been *carried out*. Thanks to your woman's wit, I believe that my future and Shelagh's is clear. And, before Heaven, my conscience is clear, too."

"Oh, Roger, it's thanks to your own courage more than to me. Is—is all safe?"

"The coffin isn't empty now. It is fastened up just as it was. The broken rope is round it again. It's covered with the tarpaulin as before. No one outside the secret would guess it had been disturbed. I owe more than my life—I owe my very *soul* to you. For I haven't much fear of what may come at St. Heliers to-morrow or after."

"Nor I. Oh, I am thankful for Shelagh's sake *even* more than yours, if possible. Her heart would have broken. Now she need never know."

"She must know and choose. I shall tell her everything I did. Only I need not bring you into it."

"If you tell her about yourself, you must tell her about me," I said. "I'd like to be with you when you speak to her—if you think you must speak."

"I'm sure I must. If all goes well

to-morrow, she can marry me without fear of scandal, if she's willing to marry me after what I've done to-night."

"She will be. And she shall hear from me that this woman who killed herself and our spy of the Abbey were one. As for to-morrow—all *must* go well! But the thing you found in the coffin? You'll have to dispose of it somehow."

"It's for you to decide about that, I think."

"For me? What can it have to do with me?"

"You'll see, in my cabin. If you'll trust me and come."

I went with him, my heart pounding as I entered the room. It seemed as if some visible trace of tragedy must remain. But there was nothing. All was in order. The brandy bottle had disappeared into the sea, no doubt. The tumbler so cleverly taken from this cabin was clean and in its place. There were no bits of broken glass from the vial to be seen. And the odor of bitter almonds, with which the place had reeked, was no longer very strong. The salt breeze blowing through two wide-open portholes would kill it before dawn.

"But where is the *thing*?" I asked.

"In the study," Roger answered. He motioned me to pass through the curtained archway, as I had passed before, and there I had to cover my lips with my hand to press back a cry. The desk, the big chair I had sat in, and a sofa were covered with objects as familiar to me as my own face in a looking-glass. There were Queen Anne's silver tea service and Napoleon's green-and-gold coffee cups; there were Li Hung Chang's box of red lacquer and the wondrous Buhda; there were the snuff boxes, the miniatures, the buckles and brooches, the fat watch of George the Fourth; half unrolled lay Charles the First's portrait and sketch and the Gobelín panel which had been the Em-

press Josephine's. In fact, all the treasures that had been stolen from Courtenaye Abbey! Here they were in Roger Fane's cabin on board the *Naiad*; and they had come out of a coffin found floating in the sea.

When I could think at all, I tried to think the puzzle out, and I tried to do it alone, for Roger was in no state to bend his mind to trifles. But, in his almost-pathetic gratitude, he wished to help me; and when we had locked up the things in three drawers of his desk, we sat together discussing theories. Something must be thought out, something settled, before day!

It was Roger who unfolded the whole affair before my eyes, unfolded it so clearly that I could not doubt he was right. My trust—every one's trust, in fact—in the Barlows had been misplaced. They were the guilty ones! If they had not organized the plot, they had helped to carry it through, as no one else could have carried it through.

I told Roger of the two Australian nephews about whom, if he had heard, he had forgotten. I explained that they were twin sons of a brother of old Barlow's, who had taken them out there years ago when they were children. Vaguely I recalled that, when I was very young, Barlow had worried over news from Australia; his nephews had been in trouble of some sort. I fancied they had got in with a bad set. But that was ancient history! The twins had evidently "made good." They had fought in the war and had done well. They must have saved money, or they could not have bought the old house on the Dorset coast, which had belonged to the Barlows for generations. It was at this point, however, that Roger stopped me. Had the boys saved money, or had they got it in a way less meritorious? Had they need, for pressing reasons of their own, to possess that place on the coast?

The very question called up a picture—no, a series of pictures—before my eyes. I saw, or Roger made me see, almost against my will, how the scheme might have been worked, *must* have been worked, and how at last it had most strangely failed. For an hour we talked, and made our plan almost as intricately as the thieves or their backers had made theirs. Then, as dawn paled the sky, framed by the open port-holes, I slipped off to my own cabin. I did not go to bed—I could not where she had lain—and I didn't sleep. But I curled up on the long window seat, with cushions under my head, and thought. I thought of a thousand things: of Roger's plan and mine; of how I should return the heirlooms, yet keep the secret; of what Sir Jim would say when he learned of their reappearance; and, above all, I thought of what our discovery in the coffin would mean for Roger Fane.

Yes, that was far more important to him than to me! For the fact that the coffin had been the property of thieves meant that no claim would ever be made to it. The mystery of its present occupant would therefore remain a mystery till the end of time, and Roger was safe!

The next day we reached St. Heliers, after a quick voyage through blue, untroubled waters; and there we came in for all the red tape that Roger had foreseen, if not more. But how inoffensive, even pleasing, is red tape to a man saved from handcuffs and a prison cell!

The body of an unknown woman in a coffin picked up at sea gave the chance for a dramatic story flashed from Jersey to London; and the evident fact that death had been caused by poison added an extra thrill. Every soul on board the *Naiad* was questioned, down to the chef's assistant; but exactly the same tale was told. The coffin had first been sighted at a good distance, and mistaken

for a dead shark or a small, overturned boat. The whole party were agreed that it must be brought on board, though no one had wanted it for a traveling companion, and the sailors, especially, had objected. Now, by the way, they were reveling in reflected glory. They would not have missed the experience for the world! I quaked inwardly, fearing that some one might mention the veiled female journalist who had arrived before the start with an order to view the *Naiad*. But so completely was her departure from the yacht taken for granted that none who had seen her recalled the incident.

There was no suspicion of Roger Fane, nor of any one else on board, for there was no reason to suppose that any of us had been acquainted with the dead.

The description wired to London was of "a woman unknown, probable age between forty and fifty; hair dyed auburn; features distorted by effect of poison; hands well shaped, badly kept; figure, medium; black serge dress; under-clothing plain and much torn, without initials or laundry marks; no shoes."

It was unlikely that landlords or chance acquaintances should identify the woman newly arrived from France with the woman picked up in a coffin at sea. And the gray-veiled motor toque, the gray cloak worn by the "journalist," and even the battered boots, with high, broken heels, were safely hidden with the heirlooms from the Abbey.

All through the week of the trip, the three drawers in Roger's desk remained locked, the little Yale key hanging on Roger's key ring. And all that week there was no excuse to make for going home before the appointed time—our plan had to lie in abeyance. I was impatient. Roger was not. With Shelagh by his side, and very often in his arms, the incentive for haste was all mine. But I was happy in their hap-

piness, wondering only whether Roger would not be tempting Providence if he told the truth to Shelagh.

Nothing, however, would move the man from his resolution. The one point he would yield was to postpone the confession, if "confession" is a fair word, until the last day, in order not to disturb Shelagh's pleasure in the trip. She was to hear the story the night before we landed; and I begged once more that I might be present to help plead his cause. But Roger wanted no help, no pleading. He would state the case plainly, for and against himself. Then Shelagh must decide whether she could still love him, whether she could consent to be his wife.

"At least, I shall have these wonderful days with her to remember," he said to me. "Nothing can rob me of them. And they are a thousand times the best of my life so far."

I believed that, equally, nothing could rob him of Shelagh! But I wasn't quite sure. And the difference between just "believing" and being "quite sure" is the difference between mental peace and mental storm. I had gone through so much with Roger, and for him, that by this time I loved the man as I might love a brother, a very dear and somewhat trying brother. As for Shelagh, I would have given one of my favorite fingers or toes to buy her happiness. Consequently, the hour of revelation was a bad hour for me.

I knew that, till it was over, I should be incapable of brightening. Lest I should be called upon in any such capacity, therefore, I went to bed, after dinner, with an official headache.

"Now he must be telling her," I groaned to my pillow.

"Now he must have told!"

"Now she must be making up her mind!"

"Now it must be *made up*. She'll be giving her answer. And if it's 'No,' he

won't by a word or look plead his own cause. *Hang the fool!* And bless him!"

Then followed a blank interval, when I couldn't at all guess what might be happening. I no longer speculated on the chances. My brain became a blank. And my pillow was a furnace.

I was striving in vain to read a book whose pages I scarcely saw, and whose name I've forgotten, when a tap came at the door. Shelagh Leigh burst in before I could answer.

"Oh, Elizabeth!" she gasped, and fell into my arms.

I held the girl tight for an instant, her beating heart against mine. Then I inquired, "What does 'Oh, Elizabeth' mean precisely?"

"It means, of course, that I'm going to marry poor, darling Roger as soon as I possibly can, to comfort him all the rest of his life. And that you'll be my 'matron of honor,' American fashion," she explained. "Roger is a hero, and you are a heroine."

"No; a brightener," I corrected. But Shelagh didn't understand. And it didn't matter that she did not.

CHAPTER IX.

When the trip finished where it had begun, instead of traveling up to London with most of my friends, I stopped behind in Plymouth. If any one fancied I was going to Courtenaye Abbey to wait at the shrine of lost treasures, why, I had never said, in words, that such was my intention. In fact, it was not.

What I did, as soon as backs were turned, was to make straight for Dudworth Cove on the rocky Dorset coast. I went by motor, with Roger Fane as chauffeur, and by aid of a road map and a few questions we drove to the old farmhouse which the Barlow boys had lately bought.

Of course, it was possible that Mrs.

Barlow and the two Australian nephews had departed in haste after their loss. They might or might not have read in the papers about the coffin containing the body of a woman picked up at sea by a yacht. Probably they had read of it, since the word "coffin" at the head of a column would be apt to catch their guilty eyes. But, even so, they would hardly expect that this coffin and a certain other coffin were one and the same. In any case, they need not greatly fear suspicion falling upon them, and Roger and I thought they would remain at the farm engaged in eager, secret search. As for Barlow, he, too, might be there, or he might have left the Abbey at night, about the time of his "death," in order to wait in some agreed-upon hiding place.

The house was visible from the road; rather a nice old house built of stone, with a lichened roof and friendly windows. It had a lived-in air, and a thin wreath of smoke floated above the kitchen chimney. There were two gates, and both were padlocked, so the car had to stop in the road. I refused Roger's companionship, however. The fact that he was close by and knew where I was seemed sufficient safeguard. I climbed over the fence with no more ado than in preflapper days, and walked across the weedy grass to the house. No one answered a knock at the front door, so I went to the back, and caught Barley feeding a group of chickens.

The treacherous old thing was dressed in deep mourning, with a widow's cap, and her black bombazine, or some equally awful stuff, was pinned up under a big apron. At sight of me she jumped and almost dropped a pan of meal; but even the most innocent person is entitled to jump! She recovered herself quickly and called up the ghost of a welcoming smile, such a smile as may decently decorate the face of a newly made widow.

"Why, Miss—princess!" she exclaimed. "This is a nice surprise! If anything could make me happy in my sad affliction, it would be a visit from you! My nephews are out fishing—they're very fond of fishing, poor boys—but come in and let me give you a cup of tea."

"I will come in," I said, "because I must have a talk with you; but I don't want tea. And really, Mrs. Barlow, I wonder you have the cheek to speak of your 'sad affliction.'"

By this time I was already over the threshold and into the kitchen, for she had stood aside for me to pass. Just inside the door I turned on her, and saw the old face, once so freshly apple-cheeked, flush darkly and fade to yellow. Her eyes stared into mine, then wavered, but no tears came.

"Cheek?" she repeated, as if reproving slang. "Miss Princess, I don't know what you mean."

"I think you know very well," I said, "because you have *no* 'sad affliction.' Your husband is as much alive as I am. The only loss you've suffered is the loss of the coffin in which he wasn't buried!"

The woman dropped like a jelly out of its mold into a kitchen chair. "My heavens! Miss Elizabeth, you don't know what you're saying!" she gasped, dry-lipped.

"I know quite well," I caught her up. "And to show that I know, I'm going to reconstruct the whole plot." This was bluff. But it was part of the plan. "Barlow's nephews were expert thieves. They'd served a term for stealing at home in Australia. They spent a short leave at Courtenaye Coombe, and you showed them over the Abbey. Then and there they got a big idea. They bribed you and Barlow to help them carry it out. Every man is said to have his price. You two had yours! Just how much more than others you knew about old, secret 'hide-holes' in the Ab-

bey, I can't tell, but I'm sure you did know more than any of us. There was always the lodge, too, which was the same as your own and full of your things! I'm practically certain there's a secret way to it through the cellars.

"Ah, I thought so"—as her face changed—"trusted as you were, a burglary in the night and all that binding and gagging business was as easy as falling off a log. The trouble was to get the stolen things out of the country, let's say to Australia, where Barlow's nephews could count upon a receiver or a buyer. Among you all you hit on quite a clever plan. Only a dear, kind creature like you, respected by every one, could have hypnotized even old Doctor Pyne into believing Barlow was dead, no matter what strong drug you used! You wouldn't let any one come near the body afterward. You loved your husband so much you would do everything for him yourself, in death as in life. How pathetic! How estimable! And then you and the two 'boys' brought the coffin here to have it buried in the old cemetery with generations of other respectable Barlows.

"The night after the funeral the twins dug it up as neatly. Perhaps Barlow's 'ghost' watched the process. But that's of no importance. What *is* of importance was the next thing. They took the coffin to a nice, convenient cave—that's what made this house worth buying back, isn't it?—and tethered the thing there to await an appointed hour. At that hour a boat would appear to take it away to a smart little sailing ship. Then for Australia, or some place where heirlooms can be disposed of without talk or trouble! I would bet that Barlow is on that ship now and that you meant to join him, instead of waiting for a better world. But there came that storm and a record wave or two. Alas for the schemes of mice and men—and Barlows!"

Not once did she interrupt. I doubt

if the woman could have uttered a word had she dared, for the game of bluff was new to her. She believed that by sleuth-hound cunning I had tracked her down, following each move from the first and biding my time to strike until all proofs, the coffin and its contents, were within my grasp. By the time I had paused for lack of breath the old face was sickly white, like candle grease, and the remembrance of affection was so keen that I could not help pitying the creature.

"You realize," I said, "everything is known. Not only do I know, but others. And we have all the stolen things in our possession. I've come here to offer you a chance of saving yourselves, though it's compounding a felony or something, I suppose! We can put you in the way of replacing the heirlooms in the night, just as they were taken away, by that secret passage you know. If you try to play us false, and hope to get the things back, we won't have mercy a second time. We shall find Barlow before you can warn him. And as for his nephews——"

"Yes! *What* about his nephews?" broke in a rough voice.

I started—only a statue could have resisted that start—and, turning my head, saw a tall young man close behind me in the doorway by which I'd entered. Whether or not Mrs. Barlow had seen him I don't know. She did not venture to speak, but a glance showed me a gleam of malicious relief in the eyes I had once thought limpid as a brook. If she'd ever felt any fondness for me, it was gone now. She hated and feared me with a deadly fear. The thought shot through my brain that she would willingly sit still and see me murdered if she and her husband could be saved from open shame by my disappearance.

The man in the doorway was sunburned to a lobster-red and had features like those of some gargoye. He must have been eavesdropping long enough

to gather a good deal of information, for there was fury in his eyes and deadly determination in the set of his big jaw.

Where was Roger Fane? I wondered. Without Roger I was lost, and my fate might never be known to my friends. Suddenly I was icily afraid, for something might have happened to Roger. But at that same frozen instant a very strange thing happened to me. *My thoughts flew to Sir James Courtenaye!* I had always disliked him, or fancied so. But he was so strong, such a giant of a man! What a wonderful champion he would be now! What hash he would make of the Barlow twins! Quickly I controlled myself. This was the moment when the game of bluff, which had served me well so far, might be my one weapon of defense.

"As for Barlow's nephews," I echoed with false calmness, "theirs is the principal guilt, and theirs ought to be the heaviest punishment."

The crimson gargoyle shut the door deliberately, with a horrid, purposeful kind of deliberation, and with a stride or two came close to me. I stepped back, but he followed, towering above me with the air of a great, bullying boy out to scare the life from a little one. To give him stare for stare I had to look straight up, my chin raised; and the threatening eyes, the great red face, seemed to fill the world, as a cat's face and eyes must seem to a hypnotized mouse.

I shook myself free from the hypnotic grip. Yet I would not let my gaze waver. Grandmother wouldn't, and no Courtenaye should!

"Who is going to punish us?" barked the gargoyle.

"The police," I barked back. And almost I could have laughed at the difference in size and voice. I was so like a slim young Borzoi yapping at the nose of a bloodhound.

"Rot!" snorted the big fellow. "Damn rot!" And I thought I heard a faint chuckle from the chair. "If the police were onto us, you wouldn't be here. This is a try-on."

"You'll soon see whether it's a try-on or not," I defied him. "As a matter of fact, out of pity for your two poor old dupes we haven't told the police yet of what we've found out. I say 'we' because I'm far from being alone or unprotected. I came to speak with Mrs. Barlow because she and her husband once served my family, and were honest till you two tempted them. But if I'm kept here more than the fifteen minutes I specified, there is a man who——"

"There isn't," snapped the gargoyle. "There was, but there isn't now. My brother Bob and me was out in our boat. I don't mind tellin' you, as you know so much, that we've spent quite a lot of time boatin' and prowlin' around these shores since the big storm."

The thought flashed through my brain: then they haven't read about the *Naiad*, or else they didn't guess that the coffin was the same. That's *one* good thing! They can never blackmail Roger, whatever happens to me!

But I didn't speak. I let him pause for a second and go on without interruption:

"Comin' home we seen that car o' yours outside our gate. Thought it was queer! Bob says to me, 'Hank, go on up to the house and make me a sign from behind the big tree if there's anythin' wrong.' The feller in the car hadn't seen or heard us. We took care o' that! I slid off my shoes before I got to the door here and listened a bit to your words o' wisdom. Then I slipped out as fur as the tree, and I made the sign. Hank didn't tell me what he meant to do. But I'm some on mind readin'. I guess that gentleman friend of yours has gone to sleep

in his automobile, as any one might in this quiet neighborhood, where folks don't pass once in four or five hours. Bob can drive most makes of cars. Shouldn't wonder if he can manage this one. If you hear the engine tune up, you'll know it's him takin' the chauffeur down to the sea."

My bones felt like icicles; but I thought of grandmother, and wouldn't give in. Also, with far less reason, I thought of Sir James. Strange, unaccountable creature that I was, my soul cried aloud for the championship of his strength!

"The sea hasn't brought you much luck yet," I brazened. "I shouldn't advise you to try it again."

"I ain't askin' your advice," retorted the man who had indirectly introduced himself as "Hank" Barlow. "All I ask is, where's the stuff?"

"What stuff?" I played for time, though I knew very well the "stuff" he meant.

"The goods from the Abbey. I won't say you wasn't smart to get on to the cache and nab the box out o' the cave. Only you wasn't quite smart enough. The fellers laugh best who laugh last. And we're those fellers!"

"You spring to conclusions," I said. But my voice sounded small in my own ears, small and thin as the voice of a child. Oh, to know if this brute spoke truth about his brother and Roger Fane and the car, or if he were fighting me with my own weapon—bluff!

Hank Barlow laughed aloud, though he mightn't laugh last!

"Do you call yourself a 'conclusion'?" I'll give you just two minutes, my handsome lady, to make up your mind. If you don't tell me before time's up where to lay me 'and on the stuff, I'll spring at you."

By the wolf glare in his eyes and the boldness of his tone I feared that his game wasn't wholly bluff. By irony of fate he had turned the tables on me.

Thinking the power was all on my side and Roger's, I'd walked into a trap. And if, indeed, Roger had been struck down from behind, I did not see any way of escape for him or me. I had let out that I knew too much.

Even if I turned coward and told Hank Barlow that the late contents of his uncle's coffin were on board the *Naiad*, he could not safely allow Roger or me to go free. But I *wouldn't* turn coward! To save the secret of the Abbey treasures meant saving the secret of what that coffin now held. My sick fear turned to hot rage.

"Spring!" I cried. "Kill me if you choose. My coffin will keep a secret, which yours couldn't do!"

He glared, nonplused by my violence.

"Devil take you, you cat!" he grunted.

"And you, you hound!" I cried.

His eyes flamed. I think fury would have conquered prudence, and he would have sprung then, to choke my life out, perhaps. But he hadn't locked the door. At that instant it swung open, and a whirlwind burst in. The whirlwind was a man. And the man was James Courtenaye.

I did not tell Sir Jim that my spirit had forgotten itself so utterly as to call him. It was quite unnecessary, as matters turned out, to "give myself away" to this extent. For, you see, it was not my call that brought him. It was Roger's.

As Shelagh Leigh was my best friend, so was, and is, Jim Courtenaye Roger Fane's. All the first part of Roger's life tragedy was known to my "forty-second cousin four times removed." For years Roger had given him all his confidence. The ex-cowboy had even advised him in his affair with Shelagh to "go on full steam ahead, and never mind breakers," alias Pollens. This being the case, it had seemed to Roger unfair not to trust his chum to the uttermost end. He had

not intended to mention me as his accomplice, but evidently cowboys' wits are as quick as their lassos. Jim guessed at my part in the business, thinking, maybe, that only the sly sex could hit upon such a way out. Anyhow, he was far from shocked; in fact, deigned to approve of me for the first time; and hearing how I had planned to restore the stolen heirlooms, roared with laughter.

Roger, conscience-stricken because my secret had leaked out with his, wished to atone by telling me that his friend had scented the whole truth. Jim Courtenaye, however, urged him against this course. He reckoned the Barlow twins more formidable than Roger and I had thought them, and insisted that he should be a partner in our game of bluff.

It was arranged between him and Roger that he should motor from Courtenaye Coombe to Dudworth Cove, put up his car at the small hotel, and inconspicuously approach the Barlows' farm on foot. In some quiet spot, which he would guarantee to find, he was to "lurk" and await developments.

All the details of this minor plot were well mapped out, and the only one which failed, *not* being mapped out, was that a tire of his Rolls-Royce stepped on a nail as long as Jael's. Wishing to do the trick alone, Jim had taken no chauffeur; and he wasn't as expert at pumping up tires as at breaking in bronchos. He was twenty minutes past scheduled time, in consequence, and arrived at the spot appointed just as Bob Barlow had bashed Roger Fane smartly on the head from behind.

Naturally this incident kept his attention engaged for some moments. He had to overpower the Barlow twin, who was on the alert, and not to be taken by surprise. Then a glance had to be given to Roger, to make sure he had not got a knock-out blow. Al-

together, Hank Barlow had five minutes' grace indoors with me before—the whirlwind. If it had been *six* minutes; but then, it wasn't! So why waste thrills upon a horror which had not time to materialize? And, oh, how I did enjoy seeing those twins trussed up like a pair of monstrous fowls on the kitchen floor! It had been clever of Sir Jim to place a coil of rope in Roger's car in case of emergencies. But when I said this, to show my appreciation, he replied dryly that a cattleman's first thought is rope!

"That's what you are accustomed to call me, I believe," he added. "A cattleman?"

"I shall never call you it again," I quite meekly assured him.

"You won't? What will you call me, then?"

"Cousin—if you like," I said.

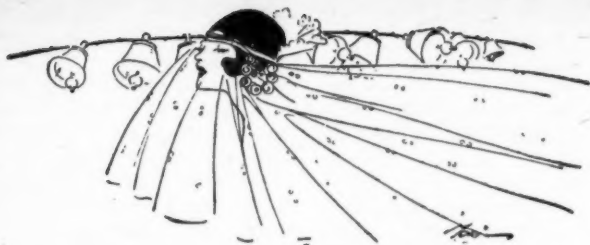
"That'll do, for the present," he granted.

"Or 'friend,' if it pleases you better?" I suggested.

"Both are pretty good to go on with."

So between us there was a truce and no more detectives. But it was only to screen Roger, and not to content me, that Sir James Courtenaye allowed my original plan to be carried out: the heirlooms to be mysteriously returned by night to the Abbey, and the Barlow tribe to vanish into space, otherwise Australia. He admitted this bluntly. And I retorted that, if he hadn't saved my life, I should say that such friendship wasn't worth much. But there it was! He *had* saved it. And things being as they were, Shelagh told Roger that I couldn't reasonably object if Jim were asked to be best man at the wedding, though I was to be "best woman."

She was right. I couldn't. And it was a lovely wedding. I lightened my mourning for it to white and lavender—just for the day. Mrs. Carstairs said I owed this to the bride and bridegroom—also to myself as a brightener.



At Four O'Clock

By Peter Clark Macfarlane

Author of "Exploits of Blige and Ma," "Puss or Bear Cat," etc.

SORRY, Bruce; sorry as anything, but I cannot see it any other way," the girl said regretfully, and gave the young man a direct glance out of troubled eyes. "Three times now we've been engaged, isn't it?" she asked hopelessly. "And when it comes to facing the—the—what's beyond, I just can't go any farther."

"But you will," persisted the young man dauntlessly. "You do love me, only you haven't found it out yet. Dorothy! I can't stick around here forever, you know that. I've got to be on about the other business of life—of our lives; but there is my permanent address." He handed her an envelope. "I'll never come back till you send for me. And when you do, I'll start from wherever I am in the world, if it's one month from now or ten years. I'll start on the first boat, train, motor car, airplane, reindeer sledge, or whatever the transportation is, and I'll come."

"Oh!" flushed the girl, with a gasp of something that was very like pain. "Don't—don't spoil your life, Bruce, by waiting too long." Soberly she offered him her hand for the parting.

"Won't you give me just one kiss, Dorothy?" the lover coaxed. "Just one."

"Bruce, if it was for friendship and

a long parting—yes, unhesitatingly," the girl said frankly, still with that concerned expression upon her face. "But it isn't. The only kiss of mine that could be of any significance to you is the one I cannot give."

A pair of dynamic black eyes closed and opened quickly as if a blow had been struck. "Very well, Dorothy," the young man said, huskily but not a bit unkindly—not a bit resigned, either—just determinedly; "very well, Dorothy. Good-by." He pressed her hand and bent over it lingeringly, then straightened up and went away—away.

And yet Dorothy Anderson was rather a colorless girl, one would have thought, for any man to have been quite so mad about, especially this rising young engineer. Bruce Porter was tall, strong, dark; he was aggressive and resolute, positive in every attribute of character where Dorothy seemed to be so nearly neutral or negative. Perhaps the explanation was that the engineer had strength and color to spare. He may have thought that he discerned beneath the slightly tinted cheek of the girl, behind those wistful lips and earnest, troubled eyes, underneath that timid manner, a woman with a heart of gold, with the capacity of the ivy for twining itself about the oak with tendrils

which could not be broken. He had wanted those tendrils to twine themselves about the rugged limbs of his own life and they had refused to do so thus far; hence his departure from San Francisco.

The days and the weeks of this absence stretched into a year. Then one morning, Dorothy, with her breakfast, received a telegram.

I am coming to you by *The Lark*, which is the first and fastest train. Meet me!

To receive such a communication at all from Bruce was startling. To receive it this morning was an odd coincidence, since it was only yesterday that, for the first time and to her bosom friend, Adeline Rowley, she had told the story of that last parting from him. And Adeline, having promised confidence, had that same afternoon divulged the sacred secret to her fat and rollicking husband, Clarence, although with this saving grace in the betrayal, that it was done in Dorothy's presence, while she was having tea with them at Te-chau's Tavern as their guest. Clarence, who knew Bruce, had endeavored to tantalize by recounting stories of the rapid strides the young engineer was making in his profession in Los Angeles, together with elaborations on the large number of marriageable orange-grove beauties who had set their eyes and hearts upon him. Teasingly he had suggested that now or never was the time to summon Bruce.

But now it was Bruce who had sent the telegram. The girl read the message again and smiled. She felt a woman's sense of pride in the knowledge that she had drawn a strong man from his orbit. But there was more in the circumstance for her than that. It made her heart warm toward Bruce to know that he could be bent from the perpendicular at all. One thing that had kept her back from marrying him was a kind of fear of his dominant moral strength.

His tenacity of purpose frightened her. It was overawing that he could have the effrontery to say: "Ten years from now I will be as I am now, devoted to you. Wherever I am, whatever I am doing, I will drop it and come." It required not only a large egotism, but a strong nature to issue a challenge like that to the future. Now she knew that he was not as indomitable as he seemed. She liked him better for it, much better, and went both blithely and curiously to the train.

Bruce came bounding through the station gates like a boy and crushed her with irresistible assurance in his arms, then stood holding her off with beaming admiration in his splendid eyes. She had never seen him so happy, so handsome, so vital as now, never felt so honored in having won a strong man's love, or so regretful that she could not reward it as it should be rewarded. She ought to love him. "What is the matter?" she reproached herself. "Maybe if I married him, I might learn to love him."

But Bruce was turning from her now and ushering forward a strong, gray woman, dark of complexion and eye as himself, slightly bent as with years of early toil long since succeeded by a life of placid comfort.

"My mother, Dorothy!" Bruce said proudly. "Meet my mother."

The mother took the girl's hand almost reverently, and scanned her face with a gentle, unobjectionable but searching scrutiny as if to observe not only its smooth surface, but to judge what lay beneath the surface.

"May I kiss you too?" she asked, and did. The almost devout manner of this, together with the tender warmth of her greeting, left Dorothy somewhat nonplused at Bruce's own demeanor.

"I felt that I must see the woman my son was to marry," said the brown and gray lady, as in explanation of her journey and her action. Immediately

she added comfortingly: "You are all, dear, that he said."

"Marry?" inquired Dorothy with a start, and looked up at Bruce. At this interrogation the mother's own features assumed an expression of bewilderment until her son's hearty laughter rang out.

"Marry! You little joker! Yes," he crowed hilariously. "We are going to be married." Then the mother laughed too, and Dorothy, not wishing to appear slow, joined in as at her own humor.

But another form was lingering there behind Bruce, and this time a masculine one.

"My brother Lawrence!" her lover announced, and presented a man obviously half a dozen years older than himself, equally tall and good looking, but with a more serious countenance.

Lawrence greeted Dorothy with a grave, kind smile, reading her features quite as searchingly as had his mother.

"Larry came up to be my best man," explained Bruce, slapping his brother heartily upon the back.

"Yes," elaborated the brother; "when Bruce got your telegram he couldn't contain himself at all. Nothing would do but he must rush up here by the next train, and his happiness means so much to mother and me that we packed right along with him so as to be in at the fatal moment." Lawrence smiled engagingly. Dorothy did not reciprocate immediately.

Her telegram! The girl's brain was whirling. She felt a sudden faintness at the heart. There had been a telegram then purporting to come from her? That officious meddler, Clarence Rowley, had sent it, of course. One of his ghastly jokes! If the man only could understand it, she thought angrily, he was a bigger joke than any he ever perpetrated. She had always hated him, she knew now. She could have strangled him barehanded if he were only here. But he was not.

Indignant repudiation was the first

impulse of the girl's mind; and yet, looking into the sparkling, approving eyes of Bruce's doting mother and loyal brother, Dorothy had not the heart to tell them that there had been a mistake, that she had sent no telegram. It was something she would have to make clear to Bruce privately, and let him assume the burden of explanation.

But in the taxicab, so close to the three of them, each big and rather overpowering, and with Bruce so glowing with happiness, so chock-full of a most glorious self-assurance, she perceived just what a crushing blow it was going to be to him, to his pride and self-esteem, to learn that he had been victimized. She began immediately to distrust herself and to wonder if she should ever have the heart to deal that stroke. In case she had not the strength to deal it, the stream of consequences stretching out in perspective threw her into a panic. A sense of guilt increased this panic, for if she had not betrayed what should have been regarded as a sacred confidence of a lover, Clarence Rowley could never have sent the telegram. This combination of panic and guilt abated her capacity for reasoning clearly. Things appeared inevitable to her which were not inevitable. And her powers of resistance were weakened by this mental blur. She felt herself enthralled by circumstances which should not have been permitted to enthrall.

And, of course, it was just this dizzy moment when the sweetly solicitous mother, so anxious to compliment the bride-to-be by explaining what her son's dashing to her at this time had meant, added to the conscience-stricken girl's sense of responsibility by remarking:

"It was very dangerous, leaving the bridge to-day."

"The bridge?" asked Dorothy, vaguely clutching at any new idea.

"Yes, Bruce's new bridge to carry a viaduct over a mountain chasm. They

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are joining the spans to-morrow. It is the most difficult and delicate operation of all. Upon its success depends Bruce's reputation and the largest fee he has ever received. Just one little miscalculation, just one little mistake, and—you know what happened to that great St. Lawrence bridge," concluded the lady significantly.

"Oh!" gasped the girl, turning up to Bruce a face in which alarm and gratitude mingled. "And you left that for me?" She could not help saying this. It was the indicated thing to say, yet it only contributed further to the young man's unfortunate misconception of the state of her heart. The girl knew it, and the fright in her breast increased.

"I would leave a thousand bridges for you, Dorothy!" Bruce averred, with a fond look.

"He will need all his nerves to-morrow," declared the mother, with a grave sidewise shake of the head and an attempt at a reassuring smile, but one that failed entirely to mask her anxiety.

Dorothy was thinking wildly: To-morrow? Then he is going back immediately. Hurling himself here last night. Hurling himself back to-night. Then out into the desert by automobile to some lost spot in a rocky chaos where his brain has been at work for months through scores of other men who have served him as the fingers serve the hand. The girl felt all at once a sense of the vast importance to the world of this man at her side. Through him the mountains were being leveled and water was sent coursing from the snowy tops of the Sierras over the parched deserts that, with the plashing of the silver drops, would blossom and fruit like the Garden of Eden. The people of the world needed food and he was giving it to them. She glanced up at his face with a look of shyness and admiration. She felt a sense of littleness and unworthi-

ness. Who was she that she should have drawn this man away from his duty, even for a day? What was she that her heart's obstinacy should add to his perplexities and nerve strains at this the critical moment in his valiant young life? The situation gave him a kind of ascendancy over her, a disadvantage at which she had never been before.

It was while her spirit sagged under this perception that Bruce, quite as if he knew as much of the temper of human metals as of those in which his profession dealt, and had discerned the exact moment when her will was softest, announced, as dissipating any doubts about the necessity for his immediate return to the bridge:

"Yes, we will be married this afternoon, and——"

"Married this afternoo-o-o-n?" The girl could not repress the startled question, and this time her lover saw that it was not a joke.

"Why," he responded in honest surprise, "didn't you expect to be married when you sent for me?"

This was the moment to declare herself, to speak out and, with the kindly swiftness of a surgeon's knife, cut out the wretched misapprehension by saying stoutly: "Bruce, I am sorry you have been misled, but I did not send for you to come to me. That telegram was the misguided effort of a practical joker." But she could not do it with all three of them beaming on her. They cowed her with admiration. They coerced her with love. The very vibrancy of Bruce's voice in the utterance of his question had weakened her powers of resistance further.

"Yes. Oh, yes," I expected to get married—some time," she answered; but the qualifying "some time" was whispered so low that no one heard it and so deep down in the throat that no one noticed the lip movement.

"You darling!" gloated Bruce, in transports.

The girl knew in her heart that in this answer she had been a traitor to herself and to these people. If she could only get Bruce alone for a moment before the thing got much farther; if only he would dump out the bags and his mother and brother at the hotel, and then take her home alone; but no; he had given the driver her address as the first destination.

"Just you get packed this morning," directed Bruce in his big, managing way. "I'll come for you to lunch at one, and we'll go from the St. Francis to the license office. Then I'll take you home. That'll give you an hour to dress, and we can have the clergyman there and be married at four o'clock, can't we?"

There it was again, the opportunity to strike down the gossamer filaments which were fast weaving themselves into a cable too strong to be broken; but the girl could not lift her arm against the weight which already lay upon it. She was long in replying. They thought she was puzzling out the schedule outlined for her.

"Can't we?" urged the eager Bruce.

"Yes," Dorothy answered faintly, though her lover should have read the fright in her eyes. But there were strange mental processes consequent upon that response. When Dorothy uttered that word yes, she knew it was a mere stage answer, that the instant she got her lover alone she could correct it, must correct it. Yet the moment she had spoken, she knew she had bound herself before two witnesses to marry Bruce Porter that afternoon at four o'clock. She felt the bonds of matrimony tightening upon her wrists like gyves; she felt herself drowning, drowning in a sea of matrimony.

"It required a great deal of character to make that decision so swiftly," said Mrs. Porter, patting the girl upon

the arm. "I am very proud of you for that." She beamed encouragingly, as understanding well that natural reticence with which any girl shrinks from the inevitableness of the marriage hour. To Dorothy one more enormous hypocrisy seemed now indicated as a part of the rôle she found herself playing, and she rose to it by replying: "Bruce must—I must see the bridge completed to-morrow, you know."

It cost her a mighty effort, that speech, and as it was completed she saw with grateful relief that the taxi was stopping just before her own number. Now to get Bruce alone! But at once other difficulties presented.

"Come inside with me a moment," she wished to say, when he helped her out of the car, but she knew the public hall of an apartment house was no place to start that awkward explanation which her guilty weakness had allowed every moment to become more awkward and more terrible. She could say: "Come upstairs, Bruce! Mother will want to see you." But then it must seem that she should ask his mother and brother to come up also, when the explanation would be more impossible still. No, no; she must get by herself, away from him, away from the spell of his masterliness, and think out what to do, and then do it quickly, resolutely, relentlessly, even.

But as Dorothy went up in the elevator a kind of conscience seemed to get hold of her. "It would be making a great sacrifice," the inner voice admitted; but it argued cleverly, "It would be for a great young man who has honored you with his love."

"The world needs him," she was saying to herself as she left the cage; "and if he needs me, who am I to be a slacker?"

Her mother met her at the door.

"Oh, mamma! Such a surprise!" the girl broke out gayly. "Bruce wants me to marry him at four this after-

noon, here, if it's convenient, and go back with him to-night to Mojave or somewhere there on the desert. His bridge is to be finished to-morrow."

Dorothy had not known at all that she was going to make this speech, yet the first sight of that dear mother's face had compelled it out of her, and the minute the words were uttered she knew they forecast the truth. She would marry Bruce Porter this afternoon at four of the clock. If there was an affected enthusiasm in her manner, it was because this devoted woman must not be permitted to know of the awful sinking in her daughter's heart, as she saw herself the helpless victim of this mad, heartless prank which fate had played upon her. The particular reason for this was that her mother had always admired Bruce and cast all her influence upon his side in the many crises which their previous engagements had produced.

Surprise, pain, and joy all mingled on the face of Mrs. Anderson. "Well, if you're not the most breathless thing!" she exclaimed, and then took time to think and to question, "Why, what brings him now?" This, plumped so suddenly, was not easy, but Dorothy managed it.

"The—the telegram!" she stammered, but was obliged to turn her back to her mother as she planted this idea which she knew would lead to false inferences, but inferences which would be protective so far as further inquiries along this line were concerned.

"Why, you little fox, you did telegraph him, then!" exclaimed the mother, with a triumphant light playing on her face. "You found you did love him—after all?"

Dorothy could not immediately trust her voice, but succeeded after an interval in once more evading an issue, this time by the imparting of some additional information. "He brought his

mother and brother up for the wedding, and we—we must go back to-night."

We. That word almost broke her. "Go back to-night?" A certain consternation expressed itself upon the mother's face.

Dorothy essayed an explanation about the bridge which must have been tolerably coherent, for Mrs. Anderson, after listening thoughtfully, decided, as she slipped her arms around the girl:

"It's sudden, child, but it wouldn't be any easier to give you up, I suppose, if I'd had six months to get ready for it. Yes; you can be married here. Oh, I am so glad you got such a good man and one you know you love!" She emphasized this with a motherly hug, but tears which joy and sorrow combined to provoke were swimming in her eyes. Dorothy kissed her impulsively and turned away, for she had warning that her own lachrymal ducts were about to overflow.

"We must hurry about your things," remembered Mrs. Anderson, conscious, as mothers always are, of the practical problems. "Come! I'll help you pack, dearie! Mercy! It's a quarter past eleven now."

To Dorothy any form of activity was relief, and for three quarters of an hour both pairs of hands were flying. Dresser drawers were emptied and the hope chest was turned inside out. The bed, the lounge, the davenport, even the piano, were draped with suits, gowns, skirts, petticoats, and lingerie.

The mother kept up a cheery chatter, but Dorothy was for the most part silent and subdued, packing now and then a tear in with the garments in her trunk. The mother, noticing this, smiled knowingly and fancied she understood exactly how her daughter felt.

"It's really best you took a nice long time to think it over," she commented. "Now you know exactly what you are doing."

"Just exactly!" said Dorothy, but shot her mother an involuntary tortured glance which she was glad, an instant after, had passed unnoticed.

Presently the girl folded her hands. Her mind was, somehow, far off. She saw no reason to hurry. Time had stopped. Immense distances stretched before her. The mother brought her back with:

"There, now, Dorothy. This outing skirt will be just the thing for the desert to-morrow."

To-morrow! Dorothy turned suddenly pale, with a terror in her eyes. To-morrow! She could not think to-morrow, even. To-morrow seemed eternities beyond. Not even Bruce Porter could build a bridge from to-day until to-morrow.

"It seems such an odd place for a honeymoon—desert and cactus and cabins and construction gangs!" reflected the mother, folding the khaki skirt smoothly, then looking about for the russet walking boots which went with it.

Dorothy's hands had been hanging listless for ever so long—two minutes, maybe. She aroused suddenly and said:

"I think I'll simply have to run over and talk to Adeline. You could finish, could you, mother?" The girl looked around quite unimpressed by the responsibility of so much wide disorder and the sight of the half-filled trunk, trays, and suit case. "I believe I'll burst if I don't see Adeline."

The mother's cheerful chatter had driven the girl to the verge of distraction. There must be some one for her to confide in, some one to condole with. Mrs. Anderson looked surprised at her daughter's proposal, yet, with the briefest reflection, felt that she comprehended perfectly.

"I suppose you do want to see Adeline," she conceded indulgently. "Yes, dearie, I can finish. You throw the things you want to take into a pile there, and I'll stow 'em in somehow."

For a few minutes Dorothy was very active, making swift decisions and rapid movements; then, kissing her mother a brief good-by, she was gone, hurrying up the Mason Street hill and around the corner onto Bush Street and the house where Adeline and Clarence dwelt in comparative peace and a sort of syncopated harmony. The maid admitted her.

"Oh, Adeline!" the girl cried, as she went hurrying down the hall.

"Here! In here!" called the familiar voice, and Dorothy traced it to the breakfast room. "Adeline!" she began, with an emotional outburst just trembling on the threshold of speech when, lo, she discovered that Adeline was not alone. That Clarence might be there dawdling over a breakfast so belated that it synchronized with luncheon was a possibility she had not taken into account; but there he sat, his round face taking on temporarily an apprehensive expression as he heard the girl coming and remembered an incident which at high noon seemed less funny than it had the night before.

Something as instantaneous as the flickering of a camera shutter altered the expression on Dorothy's face before it could have been noted by any one. Pride! She would never in a thousand years let that amiable ass, Clarence Rowley, know how successfully he had thrown a monkey wrench into the whole machinery of her life.

"Oh!" she beamed, "Adeline! I am so—so happy!" Dorothy threw rapturous arms about Mrs. Rowley's shoulders from behind, as that lady sat before her grapefruit, and soon was raining tears into her neck. "Bruce has come!" she clamored hysterically. "We are going to be married—married!" There was a leap in her voice as she uttered the word that stamped Dorothy Anderson as a talented emotional actress. "We're to be married this afternoon. I am just delirious with joy."

"You look it, you dear!" declared Adeline, and, lifting the girl's head, kissed her face; then forced it to submit to a very searching scrutiny. To escape this, Dorothy turned upon Clarence with: "Oh, I am so grateful to you for sending that telegram. It was just what was needed to bring things to—a head!"

The moon face of Mr. Rowley widened and glowed like a sunset, and he glanced at his wife in triumph. "Ha, ha, ha!" he brayed "Bruce came in a hurry, hey? Oh, he was Johnny-on-the-spot, all right. Some speed, I'll say. Set you on fire, too. Warmed your cold heart. Carried you right off your little tootsy-wootsies with the impetuosity of his wooing, huh? Married this afternoon. Well, well, well! Tell us about it, Dot! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Clarence Rowley!" rebuked his wife, "stop that perpetual conversation of yours and she will have a chance to tell us about it. That's what she came over for."

Dorothy did tell them about it, in breathless, hysterical sentences. She was restless. She laughed and she cried as she invited them to the wedding. She sat in all the chairs in the dining room except the two occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Rowley during the course of her narrative. At length she went.

"Gosh, but it's wonderful to see a woman as happy as that!" exhaled Clarence, throwing a chest. "And to think that I did it!"

But Adeline was thoughtful, doubtful even, toying with her coffee spoon and wearing a puzzled air. Suddenly she straightened up with an expression of having solved the mystery.

"Happy?" she scorned, with a contemptuous glance and a jerk of her decidedly blond head. "The girl is just breaking her heart! Happy! The poor child! You have ruined her life."

"I? I ruined her young life?" de-

manded Clarence in injured tones, and sat with astonished, suddenly sobered features. "Why, she just thanked me for making her happy forever."

"She doesn't love that—that human logarithm!" declared his wife hotly. "She's just carried away by the suddenness of it. She hasn't got the heart to humiliate him before his brother and mother. She's just so big she won't risk shattering his nerve for to-morrow by turning him down."

The eyes of Clarence Rowley opened wide and revealed themselves as very blue and impressed. "If that's it," he breathed, "by gravy, she is big! Why, Ad, it's wonderful. My hat's off, too, to Bruce Porter for coming after her at a time like this. Gosh! You can't call him a logarithm! No ice in his shoes! The man's impulsive! He's brave!"

"Oh, just like you to think of the man," flashed his wife scornfully. "What does the man matter? What do a thousand bridges matter when a woman's happiness is concerned? Bravery? Why, if ever you saw bravery in your life, it's this—this dear little thing going on for—for a principle, I suppose you'd call it. She came over here to tell me the truth, too, to just cry her eyes out; but you, *you* had to be here."

Mrs. Rowley's blazing orbs expressed great displeasure with and great uncharitableness toward her husband, so great that he concluded it the better part of valor not to resent and not to argue.

"The question is, what to do?" he announced pacifically. "If you're right, Addie, we must stop it. You better try——"

"I better? You're the person to stop it. You started it." Mrs. Rowley uttered these remarks with biting emphasis.

"How?" inquired Clarence, temporarily cowed and under conviction.

"By telling Bruce Porter the truth!"

The joker's face, after a blank look, assumed an expression of ludicrous concern. "Porter would kill me," he decided.

"Piffle!" snapped his wife. "Pusillanimous piffle! You'd never have the nerve to do it, anyway. I'll do it myself. Then we know there'll be a clean breast of it."

"Yes," admitted Clarence, with a look of great relief. "You've always been wonderful about confessing my sins for me; you have, Ad, I admit it."

"First, I'll go over and ask her if I'm right," reflected Adeline, ignoring her husband's sarcasm. "Heavens, it's too late. Look! It's half past twelve now. She's dressing for that luncheon this minute. She'll be with him two hours, and then she'll be dressing for the—the obsequies! Clarence Rowley, I could assassinate you!"

For a moment the husband looked grieved, and then stubbornly resentful. "I'm blamed if I believe it, after all," he announced. "It's been a happy thing for her. She said so. You're wrong; that's all there is to it. You're clear off."

"I'm not, and I'm going over there and salvage her immortal soul for her," proclaimed Adeline, coming to a quick decision. "There's time enough, I do believe."

But it required some minutes to get into a dress for the street, and five more minutes were necessary in which to get down the hill to the Anderson apartments.

"Here's Adeline!" announced Mrs. Anderson, ushering her in where Dorothy was dressing.

"Just had to run in for one more minute with you, Dot, old thing!" breezed Adeline. "Oh, isn't it wonderful, wonderful, Mrs. Anderson?"

"Just isn't it?" agreed that lady enthusiastically.

But something subtle in that intonation of Adeline's which entirely es-

caped the mother went straight to the center of Dorothy's consciousness, revealing that her chum had divined the truth. At this stage of the action, and in her mother's presence, this knowledge frightened Dorothy into the sternest resolution. She turned upon her friend a face, an instant before soft and troubled, now suddenly hard. Her mild hazel eyes had a flash in them.

"Don't, Adeline Rowley! Don't you dare say one word before mother!" the flash said, and Adeline's face, assuming a mask of complaisant innocence, thereby assured her friend in distress that she would not do so for the world. Almost immediately the doorbell rang. Mrs. Anderson went once more to answer, and then there sounded a male voice in the living room. At the first note of it Dorothy's knees trembled and her face grew white.

"Dorothy! It's awful! It's terrible! It just must not be!" Adeline whispered with hoarse vehemence. But Dorothy, after one moment of weakness, had set herself to be brave, very brave.

"There! Don't start me crying," she warned. "Do I look all right?"

"But think what you're sacrificing!" remonstrated Adeline.

"Here! Hold my coat for me. There! Thank you!"

"But, Dot, I don't know you at all," confessed Adeline, staring in amazement. Then she tried again with: "You can't spoof me, Dorothy Anderson, and you can't spoof him. He's got to know it before or after. Better——"

"After? Oh, never after!" implored Dorothy, with a low note of pain in her utterance. "That would be too cruel."

Before, then!" persisted Adeline, relentlessly prodding at that slightly soft spot in the armor of Dorothy's resolve which she appeared to have discovered.

"Adeline!" This time Dorothy's voice was tense, full of a mixture of

treaty and command. "You—you must not. Oh, promise me that you-will not *interfere!* And don't unnerve me now, please! I feel as if I were doing something big. Honestly, Adeline, I never had so much respect for myself in all my life."

"What a lie!" scorned Adeline most irreverently. "It's just that idiot liability of mine getting you in a jam where you don't know how to help yourself, you poor, little squab!"

"It's for a great man who means so much to the world," persisted Dorothy, rising to a strain of exaltation.

"That's the poorest excuse for matrimony I ever heard," retorted Adeline. "You don't marry an institution, child; you marry a man."

They heard Mrs. Anderson calling. "S-s-s-h!" adjured Dorothy; "promise me you will never tell." The girl's expression was sincerely earnest.

"I—I promise!" stammered Adeline, completely baffled.

"There! Have I got my hat on properly, mother?" the girl inquired as Mrs. Anderson came to the door.

"Just a little farther back, dearie, don't you think?" suggested that faithful one; and Dorothy, after accepting this suggestion obediently, walked out with a kind of curiosity to meet her husband-to-be.

It seemed days since she had seen Bruce. She had not looked upon him as a husband-to-be when last they parted, and she had to reappraise him now—the sturdy frame, the dark-olive skin, bronzed by desert tan, the distinctive, regular features with the hump of energy on the nose, the wide, strong mouth, and the large, brilliant eyes; the whole man full of fire, but a controlled fire. He had changed his suit since morning to a blue serge—he knew that she was fond of blue on him—and wore a carnation in his buttonhole, a pink one for her, though she remembered that his own prefer-

ence was white. Calculated, calculated! Everything about him was calculated, she deduced, and resented it, perhaps unreasonably. He was an engineer; he calculated all things, including, no doubt, the tensile strength of hearts. She could not escape the feeling that for some element in her which she could not herself discern he had chosen her with his head rather than his heart; that he had, by some occultism, calculated the capacity of her soul for the strains and stresses of life, and found them adapted to his requirements exactly; that he had estimated its clinging power as he would a truss of steel. She was to be just one more accomplishment. He would be proud of her as he would be proud of a bridge. She was expected to be serviceable to his career as the bridge was serviceable.

A flood of inferences like this was pitifully disappointing. She had hoped—pathetically hoped—during all this last half hour that when she saw him as a husband he would look different, softer, more appealing. He did not.

Moreover, his sense of triumph, his feeling of satisfaction that it was she, not he, who had given in, was apparent. He looked upon her as upon the vanquished. That made it harder than anything else; but she would falter now at nothing. She went up to him and gave him a dutiful kiss.

They lunched together according to program. Outwardly Dorothy managed to be merry. She laughed at his jokes and even made some. She prattled superficially of many things; whatever popped into her mind she immediately popped out again. That was the only way, for she must keep going or, like the gyroscope, she would lose her balance and fall off the wire. She asked him to tell her about the viaduct, about the desert and the desert mountains, and in detail about the cabin in which they would spend their honeymoon. He did vivaciously, and en-

larged upon their real wedding trip to Honolulu, which they would take when the critical days with the bride were past. He did all this quite obliviously. 'He did not discern that her heart was not in her laughter, that the love light in her eyes was almost a fear light instead. That he did not discover this nor suspect it stamped him, for her, as utterly lacking in those finer perceptions, which must belong to real love. It made loving him impossible, marrying him more difficult even than it had seemed.

And yet he was admirable. The witchery of his personality cast a spell of its kind. But the luncheon must have been twenty-four hours long, she computed, and they surely stood half a day before the counter in the marriage-license office; yet when he took her home it was but three o'clock. In the proud bliss of crass ignorance, he drew her head against his breast in the privacy of the Andersons' hall. "Good-by, little sweetheart!" he said fondly. "I'll be here at four o'clock to take you away and away and away."

Away and away and away! That was what the girl felt. That was the chief consolation; she was getting away where all that she suffered would be her own to suffer. With this idea, however, incongruously, was a sense of exaltation, a joy in the pain because she was going to help a successful man, whom the world needed, to be more successful still.

But if the last two hours had dragged, the next one flew. It seemed no more than a few minutes from the time when she parted with Bruce until the doorbell was ringing and ringing and the little parlor was filling with the minister, with the Rowleys, and with the Porters; and then her mother, who had admitted them, was back, anxiously giving the last touches to her tan traveling gown, with Adeline to supervise critically.

In no time at all Dorothy was going out to face them all, feeling strangely well, strangely strong for the ordeal, alert of mind, and unusually self-possessed. Strength was being given her, she knew. But Bruce! One glance at him and she saw that he was changed, shaken. It was as if, in putting on his frock coat and gray trousers, he had put on some sort of weakness of which he was disconcertingly aware. To her it was obvious that he tried to conceal this, but obvious, also, that he failed. He laughed, but the ring of laughter was gone from his voice. It amused her to see this imperturbable, indomitable man trying to assume a nonchalance he did not feel.

Instead of the exultant glow of the conqueror there was a kind of grayness of humility upon his face. When he came close and gazed into her eyes, there was, besides this humility, a sort of chastened curiosity, and with it a look of very great tenderness, a penetrating glance which was at last almost discerning. For one thrilling moment she was hopeful, wildly hopeful, that in the end he had come to understand, to read something of the true state of her heart, and for that moment she found herself overpoweringly drawn to him, felt that she could love him just for understanding.

But in another instant she saw that it was not understanding at all; it was nothing except nervousness. She was bitterly disappointed again, but it gave her a sense of superiority to him in one particular at least, a sense that was precious, for it was the only superiority she could feel over him at all. She had heard before that the bridegroom is often the most nervous at the ceremony.

But as they took position for the rites her own self-possession began to leave her. She was rather in a daze. She knew that the clergyman was praying, that Adeline was standing there upon

her left, that Bruce was now upon her right, and the others ranged round in a semicircle. Out of this daze she heard the minister asking:

"Do you, Bruce, take this woman, Dorothy, to be your wedded wife?"

The question was followed by an awkward silence which was disconcerting. Dorothy stole a hasty look at Bruce's face and saw it pale and perspiring.

"Yes," he replied at length, but in a low, uncertain note totally uncharacteristic.

Again, contrarily, there was a feeling of amused superiority in the girl's heart, nothing else.

"And do you, Dorothy, take this man, Bruce, to be your wedded husband?" the clergyman began once more. Dorothy waited calmly till the question was finished, then answered in a clear, steady voice that rang like a bell in the room:

"Yes."

"What token do you give in pledge that you will faithfully perform these vows?"

The bride's mind was fogging slightly once more. She was giving her bouquet to Adeline, she knew that. She was even conscious that brother Lawrence, much embarrassed, was fumbling for the ring in his waistcoat pocket and not finding it readily; but she knew at last when Bruce was holding it on her finger and saying, after the minister, haltingly:

"With this ring—I thee wed—and all my worldly goods—I thee endow."

It was almost finished now, but so was her endurance. She was reeling on the edge of a precipice before an abyss of matrimony! Weakly she leaned on Bruce for support, and, lo, he was trembling. She could hardly have believed it, that he would tremble, any more than that one of his bridges would tremble if she leaned against it.

"Join your right hands!" directed the minister, drawing a little nearer and gazing upon the couple with a kind of benevolence in his eyes. Then he began to intone the final sentence: "For as much, then, as you, Bruce Porter, and you, Dorothy Anderson, have consented together in holy wedlock and have plighted——"

There was a start, a stir, a silence. The clergyman had stopped abruptly. He had been interrupted. But it was by a movement rather than a spoken word, and this ensuing silence, which had instantly become dramatic, was broken in upon by a voice. This, to the complete astoundment of all, was the voice of the bridegroom, freighted with a painful emotion.

"She—doesn't love me," he stammered, his voice breaking upon the words. "She has promised what she can't perform. She has been tricked into a false position." Hoarse and gray, he put her gently but definitely away from him, then struggled on, addressing himself first to the minister and then to the company: "I couldn't believe at first—that any man could play so cruel a joke as has been played to-day. And then I couldn't believe that any woman could have so much of the spirit of self-sacrifice and devotion in her—without love. I have put her to the test. You all have seen her meet it. I have heard the truth of her soul's greatness in every accent of her responses. It makes her a thousand times more precious to me—but—but I cannot permit the sacrifice. I never meant to from the moment I knew it was a sacrifice. But an imperative something said to me: 'Go on! Go on! See if she will.' I have seen it!" The note of tragedy in the man's utterance moaned in the little room. His heart, his very frame seemed broken.

The clergyman's face registered in succession astonishment, shock, sympathy, comprehension. The moments

immediately following were exclamatory.

"Bruce!" wept his mother. "Oh, Bruce!"

"Dorothy!" cried Mrs. Anderson solicitously. "Dorothy!"

"Well, thank Heaven!" ejaculated Adeline.

Lawrence looked stunned and helpless, then turned an accusing eye upon Clarence Rowley, whom he had seen talking to his brother at the hotel not twenty minutes before. Rowley's round face displayed the profoundest distress and contrition. "That's me," he confessed. "I'm the dub! But, say! I had the nerve to tell him before it was too late—and he had the sense not to kill me. He's a real man at that, I'll say!"

Dorothy, all this time, had been clinging to Adeline, although without regarding her in the least, her glance fixed in amazement on her lover.

"Why, Bruce! Bruce!" she called in clear, startled, even affectionate tones. The girl's eyes were lighting as if she had seen a marvel. There was a smile upon her lips as of pure joy over a belated and wonderful discovery, the discovery that there was this soft core in the heart of Bruce Porter, after all. In this great, broken moment he had become lovable. She slid into his limp arms. "Bruce!" she whispered in his ear, in a voice frayed by her own emotions, "I love you. I do love you! I didn't but—I do!"

The man was so crushed and spiritless that at first he was slow to comprehend the significance of this sudden change which his supreme renunciation had wrought in her; but the girl's touch was magnetic and convincing. A glint of the truth began to illuminate the heartbroken hollows of his face. He clutched her to him and stood looking

down into her eyes, his features slowly forming themselves into an expression rapt and worshipful.

"I love you. I do love you. I want to marry you. *I insist upon marrying you,*" she emphasized, with a little shudder of complete self-abandon undulating her shoulders.

The great, dark eyes of the man glowed again with hope and joy. "You darling!" he sobbed, and folded her close in his steel-thewed arms—a long, slow embrace, but one in which there was the strength of tenderness only. It was her heart that had spoken this time, and it was his heart that had answered.

"Bruce," she exulted, "I have found you, found the real you at last; and it is good, so good!" She drew his cheek down to hers and held it there lingeringly.

Every breast in the room was undergoing emotional disturbance, every eye was blurred, perhaps every mind a little fogged, and it seemed as if Dorothy was the first to regain composure. The girl proceeded as if she knew exactly what she wanted. She took Bruce's right hand in hers and faced again toward the minister.

"Now," she said, with shining eyes, "you may finish."

The clergyman's own eyes were unduly bright. He felt that he had witnessed, in a trice, in the twinkling of an eye, the sublime miracle of the birth of love, and was awed by it. With a hallowed smile making his features radiant, he lifted his book and began once more the intoning of the last solemn words. This time there was no interruption. He who had interrupted before drew the figure of the woman closer to him instead of putting her away, and pressed her with a spasm of ecstasy to his heart as the minister concluded with: "I therefore pronounce you husband and wife."





The Lonely Mr. Lord

By Rebecca Hooper Eastman

Author of "The Great American Husband," etc.

ALL that New York people want in the way of a home is to be able to step out of bed into the subway. And though it's none of my business, you look pretty young and carefree to be the father of five children. The suburbs for yours, young fellow, if you want a regular house, with stairs!"

Thus spoke the haughty real-estate agent, and yet Barrett Lord lingered over the small list of houses available in the greatest city. The truth was that Barrett didn't want a house at all. If you have just come to New York, and don't know a soul, and are beginning at the crowded end of the ladder, you are lonelier than in any other place on top of the earth. Barrett, who had flattered himself that he was resourceful, had discovered that he possessed a hitherto-unsuspected genius for being hideously lonesome. Thus we sometimes come upon ourselves unawares. The fact that Barrett had been the catch of his small home town in Illinois merely emphasized his newly discovered talent.

Instead of seeing New York as an interesting aggregation of little hamlets, each with its own customs and seasonal changes, the city was a trackless waste. It was Saturday afternoon, too, and here were a whole day and a half to be worried through. Barrett almost burst into tears as he pictured the scene now taking place at the country club at home. Pretending to want to buy a house for a mythical family had absorbed less than fifteen minutes.

"Which way's Fifth Avenue?" he inquired of a policeman, who, after an incredulous stare, reluctantly growled, "Block east."

There was something about Fifth Avenue which temporarily revived Barrett. He was more than casually noticed by several pretty girls. Fifth Avenue at once made you feel as if you were part of a celebration. Yes, it was the least lonely of the lonely streets of the greatest city.

"How would you like to walk up the aisle of St. Thomas' with *him*?" asked a girl in an expensive car, who had just caught Barrett's eye.

"I'd rather be walking down. I might lose him on the way up," replied her friend, who had also exchanged glances with Barrett.

Which shows how ladies in general felt about Mr. Barrett Lord.

Nobody likes to be alone, even at a celebration, and Barrett at length exhausted the joys of a solitary stroll on Fifth Avenue, and was almost reduced to wishing he had proposed to Mildred Styles, back home, the night she had tried to make him, and brought her along to New York. But although Barrett some day hoped to visit that real-estate owner in earnest, he couldn't quite see that Mildred Styles would fit in the picture. Here Barrett stopped reminiscing about Mildred and purposely jostled against a man of his own age who was basking in the smiles of a maddeningly pretty girl.

"Beg pardon," said Barrett amiably.

"My fault!" replied the other, also amiably, on account of wishing to impress his girl, who smiled slightly but definitely at Barrett.

That was all right as far as it went, but to go on jostling every one you met took too much nerve, considering that it got you nowhere. There was nothing, however, to prevent Barrett's bowing occasionally to nice-looking people as if he thought he knew them! To explain these Saturday-afternoon antics of Mr. Barrett Lord, it need only be stated that his father was the minister in that small town in Illinois. Barrett was not too lonely to be mildly intoxicated with his liberty.

"Hello, old man," he said congenially to a fat, disconsolate boy who waddled into Fifth Avenue from West Forty-fourth Street.

"Say, do you know where I could get a Scotch high ball?" inquired the fat one prayerfully.

"Yep."

"Whereabouts?"

"Get out your pencil. Two forty-three West Haven Street, Edinburgh, Scotland."

"Third time I've fallen for that one," mourned the boy thirstily.

"How do you do?" inquired Barrett with deferential gallantry of a tall, thin woman with a red nose and large pearl earrings. She was being taken out to walk by three Pomeranians.

"Oh, howdydo? Gorgeous weather!"

"Weather man must have made a mistake," agreed Barrett, hoping she would stop and chat. Yes, he was actually lonely enough to want to sit down and visit with a pet-dog spinster. But she didn't stop, although she smiled vaguely back over her shoulder as she pursued her zigzag course.

As he roamed along, endeavoring to appear as if he had an important engagement just up the line, Barrett saw approaching a man of fifty-five or sixty, pleasantly portly and distinguished; a

man who looked as if he knew everybody worth knowing and enjoyed each moment to the full. Furthermore, Barrett thought he appeared as if his heart and bank account were both large, and as if he was canny enough to preserve a perfect balance between the two.

"Good afternoon, sir," said Barrett respectfully. He stopped and smilingly held out his hand.

The man stared keenly for a second or two, hesitated, and then grasped Barrett's hand with unaffected warmth.

"Here you are at last!" he ejaculated. "How long you been in town?"

"Moved here about two weeks ago."

"Who are you with in business?"

Barrett mentioned the firm with which he was connected with excusable pride. Afterward he was sorry he had been so frank. It was risky to bring the name of your firm into your Saturday afternoon's adventure. And yet, although Barrett had the devil and all in his deep-set brown eyes, he didn't intend to go too far with his philandering. In fact, he couldn't—now that he had dragged in the firm's name.

"I know that firm well," remarked the New Yorker approvingly. "To think, though, that you never let us know you were here! I'll tell your father on you the next time I see him! You'll be forgiven only on condition that you come home and dine with us to-night."

"Still living in the same place?" asked Barrett skillfully.

The plutocrat had taken him for a family friend or something and was going to insist on his dining with him. He was going to take him home. Home! Wonderful word! It wasn't honest to accept, and yet, as long as he behaved himself, what possible harm could it do? Better anything than a lonely dinner in a restaurant where everybody sat smiling into some one else's eyes.

"No; we moved. Old neighborhood in West Eleventh Street got too con-

servative for the women folks. Big house, now, uptown, just off the Avenue."

"What number?" Out came Barrett's address book.

"Eight East—" And the would-be host added a number in the Eighties. "Mrs. Bronson and the children haven't come up from the country, but Enid's in town. Never met Enid, did you?"

"No, she was always away," hazarded Barrett.

"Never home!" And underneath his hospitable manner this gentleman named Bronson looked unmistakably worried, as if something had to be done about Enid at once.

Indeed, the father of Miss Enid Bronson was either nervous or exceedingly high strung, or both. As Barrett stared down at him, he wondered if the apparent plutocrat was all that his conversation and appearance indicated. The alleged Mr. Bronson might be either an adventurer or one of the slightly crazy members which every famous old family boasts.

"Got to meet a man here at my club," said Mr. Bronson, glancing up at the building in front of which they stood. "If you're not busy, come in while I'm having my conference. I'll dig up somebody for you to play auction with."

So Barrett Lord, the lonely, found himself swinging in at the doors of one of the most fashionable and conservative clubs in New York.

"Hello, Netherlow," remarked Mr. Bronson to a withered, lank, disgusted-looking man who sat smoking a pipe and gazing at nothing. "This is young Dangerfield," he said, presenting Barrett. "Father's a pal of mine. Want to get up a card game while I have a two-hour conference upstairs?"

"Quarter of a cent a point?" inquired Netherlow of Barrett.

"Suits me," grinned Barrett.

"Then that's fixed!" said Mr. Bronson with an inconsistent apprehension

in his tones. And he made a dash for the elevator.

"I had given up hope of getting a fourth," remarked Netherlow, animatedly leading the way to the card room. "Almost ready to run out in the street and drag in a stranger."

From his dry tone, however, Barrett gathered that Mr. Netherlow wouldn't have allowed himself to be rescued from drowning unless it was by a person whose pedigree he approved.

The other two men were somewhat distant until Netherlow murmured something about Barrett's being a lifelong friend of the Bronsons, whereupon they accepted him on probation. Before the end of the afternoon, however, they gave up being critical. They couldn't resist the irresistible, and they showed their approbation by friendly grunts when Barrett made a good play.

"Glad you're hitting it off with the boys!" interrupted Mr. Bronson's voice at seven o'clock.

Then Barrett Lord, the lonely, after handing seventy-eight cents to the charmed and victorious Netherlow, followed his host to a waiting car. Uneventfully, except for the rapid beating of Barrett's heart, they glided uptown to a palace in the East Eighties. Outwardly pretentious as the place was, Barrett, nevertheless, found himself unprepared for the splendor within as he followed his host through the great, bronze doors into a vast, dim hall hung with tapestry. Mr. Bronson disappeared in the distance, leaving Barrett in a downstairs dressing room with a respectful manservant, who took his hat and stick and, although he had just been thoroughly brushed at the club, insisted on giving him another spring cleaning. No wonder millionaires needed a lot of clothes, the way their servants brushed the life out of them!

"This way, sir," said the man, leading Barrett past a magnificent double staircase to an elevator, in which they

rode up one story and emerged on the drawing-room floor.

It was thus that Mr. Barrett Lord, the lonely, found himself in the most sumptuous room he had ever entered. He had not supposed that any room in New York could live up to the Grand Central Station, but this one certainly, though not a tenth as large, gave him quite the same sense of space and beauty. Although it was October, the window boxes outside the lofty windows were filled with brilliant flowers.

Meantime, upstairs, Miss Enid Bronson was objecting.

"You surely don't expect me to stay in and waste my evening amusing a strange man!" she protested to her father.

"Certainly not, my dear. I just wanted you to know that this is the son of my old college playmate, Dangerfield."

"Not the dreadful old windbag who made millions in oil?"

"Who *inherited* millions in oil," corrected her father humbly.

This interchange of hostilities took place in a far-off upper room, on the seventh floor, in a sort of an office. Enid herself was seated at a paper-strewn roll-top desk, and in the corner her tight-lipped secretary, Miss Pratt, tapped away like mad.

"You won't think much of young Joe Dangerfield," continued Mr. Bronson. "His father was handsome enough at his age, but the generations seem to be petering out."

"I suppose I can come down and be decent, but I wish he hadn't appeared when I'm so busy. I've had three extra women working all day to get off my mail."

"This remark was addressed to her father's back as he rambled out of the room.

"I shall have to go now, Miss Pratt," said Miss Bronson to her secretary. "I intended to have my dinner sent up on

a tray and dictate letters while I ate. Occasionally, however, it is necessary to humor father."

"Enid will be right down," said Mr. Bronson, while he was journeying across the drawing-room to a chair in Barrett's neighborhood.

"It's wonderful—your new house, I mean!" said Barrett, when it became evident that he must say something or reduce his host to awkward questions.

"Like this place better than the old one on West Eleventh Street?" asked Mr. Bronson narrowly. For the second time, Barrett wondered if there wasn't something odd about Mr. Bronson. It might be that the man who was posing as the owner of all this magnificence was only an upper servant, enjoying himself while the family was in Europe. And yet, there was the club and Netherlow. For the second time, however, the lonely Mr. Lord found himself wishing that he hadn't brought in the name of his firm.

"I liked the West Eleventh Street house better," said Barrett nervously. Although nearly overcome by the richness with which he was surrounded, Barrett had concluded that the place was about as homelike as Grant's Tomb.

"Why?" asked Mr. Bronson in a tone which made Barrett wonder if the old man had ever lived on West Eleventh Street. Maybe there wasn't any West Eleventh Street in New York. Barrett would investigate to-morrow.

"I thought the West Eleventh Street house had a more homelike atmosphere," said Barrett, looking Mr. Bronson squarely in the eye. "And I happen to like real homes."

"Going to call you Joe. You're aware that you are indirectly criticizing my present abode?"

"Which is not grateful, when you saved me from a lonely evening."

An adventure was all right, unless it got to be too hard work. He was carrying the joke a little too far for com-

fort. Loneliness was preferable to the sensation of picking some one's pocket. So Barrett rose and stood very straight against a background of roses.

"Look here, Mr. Bronson," he began, "I'm sorry, but——"

And then Enid Bronson stood suddenly framed in the doorway, and Barrett forgot all else.

For a New York girl who had twice spoken in Carnegie Hall, Miss Bronson seemed singularly embarrassed. Because her oblivious father had told her that Barrett was a poor specimen, she was totally unprepared for the best-looking man she had ever seen. Enid liked them tall and dark, anyway, but what chiefly captivated her in Barrett were his fine, firm, decent mouth, and the way he carried his head, as if he saw something wonderful just a little bit farther ahead. He looked literally like a man with vision. When Barrett smiled down at her, something iron, which had been pressing against the nerves in the back of her neck, suddenly melted away, and she felt a delicious coolness instead. She hoped, dizzily, that he wouldn't be a bore.

"Daughter Enid, Joe Dangerfield," muttered Mr. Bronson. "Come, children!" he added, well-nigh upsetting the butler in his quick turn.

And he led the way to a dining hall which would have made a king jealous. Enid followed with languid grace, and Barrett followed her, marveling as he went. It was absurd, finding her here, under such incongruous circumstances. But suppose he hadn't found her! Suppose he hadn't impulsively chosen to bow to Mr. Bronson? How little and sweet and fine she was, severely gowned in gray, with deep-gold hair and cool, impenetrable blue eyes, eyes which weren't ready for any and everybody; eyes which would acknowledge but one.

"Enid hates the country," said Mr. Bronson, as if he wished to start something.

"I hate it only because it distracts me from my work." There was something about the way in which Miss Bronson referred to her work which gave Barrett an irrational desire to shake her. "You see, Mr. Dangerfield, I give myself entirely to what I'm doing. I haven't had a day or a night off in months. To-night I'm speaking at a big mass meeting on the East Side."

"Enid is always on the wrong side of everything," said Mr. Bronson briskly. "She used to be a drawing-room bolshevist, but I don't know what she's evolved into now. There's only one consolation: whatever cause Enid espouses immediately goes to pieces. It's because she unwittingly gives things so much publicity. She's a circular fiend."

"Father!"

"Excuse me, dear. I just want Joe to know that although you mean a lot of harm, you do a great deal of good."

Enid turned upon Barrett a martyr-like expression.

"Things I'm interested in always do fail," she said. "I'm rather proud of being on the unpopular side."

Barrett resisted an impulse to rush out into the fresh air. He was afraid his goddess was about to launch out in praise of certain radicals who had been returned without thanks to their native habitats.

"Has it ever occurred to you that the solution of most of the wrongs of the day is a little brotherly love on *both* sides?" he asked. Though he spoke quietly, there was a crispness in his tones which brought the hot blood to her cheeks.

"You don't want to take Enid too seriously, Joe," said Mr. Bronson, who looked as if he would like to cheer. "As I say, she digs up every awful movement that's going on, and gives it so much publicity that she kills it. Some time she will wake up and find that she would serve humanity to a better pur-

pose if she worked through constructive instead of destructive channels."

"Telephone, Miss Bronson," murmured the butler respectfully.

As soon as his daughter had left the room, Mr. Bronson leaned quickly in Barrett's direction.

"When Enid started in having these ideas, I thought it was idlemindedness and that her common sense would swing her round. When I found she was getting in deeper, I did everything to show her how she was wasting her time. I stopped her allowance. Close the door, Hawkins." Quietly the man obeyed, and as he did so, he underwent a transformation. "Hawkins is a member of the secret service," said Mr. Bronson. "Since that horrible affair in Wall Street, I am afraid Enid will get drawn into something I don't like to think of. She doesn't dream of the number of things she has exposed. I can't lock her up, but I'm using every precaution possible. You're right about brotherly love on both sides, Joe. I——"

At that moment the door opened, and Miss Bronson came back. The fact that she didn't seem the least suspicious of the conversation during her absence disarmed Barrett almost as much as her beauty had done.

"You know that hydroplane you were looking at last week, Enid," said Mr. Bronson.

"Yes."

"Bought it for you yesterday. It's less dangerous than your meetings!"

"You bought it! You perfect old dear! Just as I was about to disown you!"

And regardless of her dignity as a public character, Miss Bronson arose, ran around behind her father's chair, and embraced him.

"I took the liberty of naming it *The Cause*. They've already painted the name on it, Grimes tells me. Grimes is the pilot."

"You named it after my work?"

"I didn't say whose cause or what cause."

"What are you going to do with your new hydroplane?" inquired Barrett eagerly.

"After I've learned to run it, I'll use it to strew round propaganda."

"If that's the case, I'm afraid something unforeseen will happen to it!" remarked Mr. Bronson dryly. "What time is this precious meeting of yours to-night?"

"I speak last, so I sha'n't leave the house until half past nine."

"In that case we can simulate a little home life in the library," said Mr. Bronson. "Come on, Joe." Disdaining the elevator, he led the way up marble stairs, and, leaving his daughter and Barrett in a room the entire walls of which were books, he disappeared with the information that he was going to have a postprandial long-distance chat with Mrs. Bronson, in the country.

Now that he was left alone with the physical embodiment of his dreams, Barrett didn't feel half as much like laying down the law to Miss Bronson as he had during dinner. Addressing her in the dining room had been talking at her through her father. The butler, especially after Barrett had learned his real status, was a moral support.

During dinner, too, Barrett had wished, almost prayed, that he might be left alone with her, partly to see how it felt and partly because, he told himself, he would like to knock some sense into her bewitching young head. Now that they were marooned in the library, he found himself intimidated by a young lady who regarded a hydroplane only as a means to disseminate tracts.

Since mind-reading never works when you want it to, Barrett had no way of discovering what Enid Bronson was thinking about as she lay back so lifelessly in one of the most comfortable chairs. Was it his imagination, or did she pale visibly beneath his gaze? Her

small hands on the arms of the chair looked as bloodless as camellias and of the same texture. As they sat there in taut, expectant silence, Barrett noticed that two bright tears were forcing themselves out of her downcast eyes. With infinite tact, he turned and affected interest in the bookcase just back of him, and didn't turn again until the struggle was over. Then he found her gazing at him with such a piteous expression that he felt as if a whole miserable world gazed at him through her eyes, crying for relief.

"Won't you come out for a little walk with me?" he asked quietly. "It's lovely and still outside. You have been working and thinking so hard and staying so constantly indoors that you must be fagged."

"I think I'd like to go to walk!" she said unexpectedly. "I'll be down in just a minute. But you mustn't let me be late to my meeting."

With just the correct amount of respectful emphasis, Barrett promised that she should not be late. When she had left the room, however, he found that his head was swimming and every pulse in his body dancing. Without realizing whither she was drifting, she was beginning to let him look after her this very evening. Any danger that lay in her path only made him more alive to his responsibility.

"I asked Miss Bronson to come out for a little walk!" he explained, when Mr. Bronson returned. His doubts of Mr. Bronson had completely vanished; indeed, he had almost forgotten his own deception.

"She isn't going, is she?" Mr. Bronson was plainly pleased.

"She says she is."

"Trouble with Enid is we brought her up without enough discipline. The rest of the family survived it, but Enid, having the family brains, needed more management than she ever got. By the

way, they're going to deliver that hydroplane next Saturday."

"Fine!" said Barrett with empty enthusiasm. He suddenly remembered that he had been acting a part for the last four hours, and that he was bound to be found out. He wondered if the secret-service butler had noted any slip. By next Saturday his name would probably be taboo in the Bronson ménage.

"Didn't know but what you might like to fly down to the country with *The Cause*. Grimes is a fine pilot, and it's a shame to waste that extra seat."

"Don't you yourself——"

"All I ask in this world is to be excused from setting foot in one of the things. You'd better arrange with Enid about flying down, for it's her machine."

When Miss Enid Bronson reappeared, both men noted that she had changed from the severely tailored gray gown into something so soft and glowing that it had the general appearance of the petals of a rich, dark flower.

"Not going to wear that on the East Side, are you?" asked Mr. Bronson with elaborate surprise. Apparently what one wore when speaking on the East Side had been a matter of contention in the family.

"From now on I shall dress just as if I were speaking uptown. They mustn't think that I am dressing down to them."

"What about Harris and the car?"

"I shall go and come in the subway, to-night."

"I'll see that Miss Bronson gets safely home," promised Barrett, wondering if her cool, clear tones would contradict him. They did not, and, what was even more surprising, neither did Mr. Bronson's. It occurred to Barrett that Mr. Bronson ought not to be surprised at his daughter's oddities when he himself was capable of making

such a colossal mistake in Barrett's identity.

As Barrett ran lightly down the front steps, conscious that Mr. Bronson, who had followed them informally to the front door, smiled after them paternally, he had a prophetic vision of himself some day coming down out of that same doorway, with the same girl at his side and the same father looking happily after, the only difference being a large crowd of elegantly garbed on-lookers armed with confetti and old shoes.

"Too bad to be pacing the city streets," remarked Barrett in an effort to conceal the fact that he didn't mind what sort of streets he paced with her.

"I think so, too," agreed Enid. "Let's go to Pelham Manor."

"Where's that?"

"Just out of town. We can catch the subway express and be there in half an hour. My best friend has a house there. She'll let us wander restfully round her gardens and enjoy the moonlight. I suppose you like moonlight, Mr. Dangerfield."

"The only excuse for the sun is that it makes moonlight possible. But your meeting?"

"When I'm as tired as this I can't do myself justice. I'm going to cut that meeting. I've been more faithful than any of the rest of the uptown committee. They stay away for purely social reasons, whereas this is the first meeting I have ever missed."

They walked slowly down the stairs of the subway.

"Two, please!" said Barrett, exultant in the thought that he was spending money on her.

"I did think of having Harris drive us out to Pelham, but in my present mood I don't want to see Harris or any of the servants or anything that remotely concerns what I'm trying to do. I suppose I must be having a brain storm, Mr. Dangerfield. I hope a little

country air will put me back in condition."

Miss Bronson's friends in Pelham Manor had motored up to Lenox for the week-end, said the surprised waitress, who came to the door in garments which were a striking contrast to her usual neat uniform.

"If you'd a-telephoned, the way you usually do, Miss Bronson——"

"It's all right, Lizzie," said Enid, who didn't think it worth while to mention that she had known her friends were out of town. "We only want to sit on the veranda a while and enjoy the moon."

"Could I make you some hot chocolate or something, Miss?"

"Hot chocolate, thanks, Lizzie."

"Even the moon depresses me, to-night," announced Miss Bronson pensively, thinking how soothing it was to have the blues in such company. "You see, Mr. Dangerfield, although I work like mad to make the world better, I never seem to accomplish much except to stir people up and make them wretched. Nothing is ever *done*! How can I go on, if I get more and more pessimistic? I feel, really, as if it would kill me if I had to attend one of those important, feverish committee meetings, when the millennium is always just round the corner."

"You can't be a power for good when you preach nothing but dissatisfaction. You ought to change your act. The brotherly love idea is old, but it has never really been tried."

"That's entirely too vague. I must have something definite to spend my days for. I can't do the society stunt, it bores me, and it's the only alternative, because I have no talents."

"The best thing you could do for your country, Miss Bronson, is to marry and bring up some real Americans. We need 'em."

"I prefer any other calling to the

brainless occupation of marriage." She spoke with chilly scorn.

"Forgive me. I didn't know that you had considered it."

"To my thinking, marriage presents one of the worst problems in the world to-day." This was said with her best platform manner.

"You don't know how happy you would be in your own home."

"I have my own home."

"I don't mean a large hotel like the place where you live. I mean a regular, cute, little, smiling house, small enough to be happy in."

"It doesn't appeal."

"Is there anything that would appeal, Miss Bronson?"

"Nothing, I think, Mr. Dangerfield, except to dance up one of those pretty moonbeams away from an incomprehensible world. Aren't you tired of this sick old world?"

"I'm just crazy to conquer it."

"How?"

"I want to make enough money, respectably, to bring up one of those families of Americans I spoke of in the coziest little house you ever——"

"You'll have no difficulty in doing that, for you are just the sort of man the average girl is looking for. A thinker like myself would have to be appealed to in some more subtle way than with bungalows and babies. You're too obvious, Mr. Dangerfield. It was hopeless from the first minute I heard your name. You are the son of one of daddy's pals, an old plutocrat from out of town, and daddy pounces on you in the street, brings you home in his teeth, and lays you at my feet, hoping I will pick you up and marry you. A husband and a hydroplane, all in one evening. No, thanks!"

And she walked slowly down the steps to the lawn, and, humming an eerie little tune, began to do a slow, staccato dance to the moon. It was entirely imprudent, and it was effec-

tive because she was as earnest as a composer who uses his music to escape from things mundane. For the moment, she seemed so unrelated to the world of sordid facts that Barrett half expected to see her slip up into the shining sky. In order to prevent it, he ran after her, and at the end of a mad swirl caught her in his arms.

"So this is where my dreams have led me!" she exclaimed coldly. But she didn't draw away until she had lingered for one ecstatic moment. Then she walked away with such a contemptuous gesture that Barrett cried:

"Don't, please, take me seriously! Girls expect romance with moonlight, and I was only trying to play up. And since you have been so frank, I'll be frank, too. I'm not Joe Dangerfield. I come from a little Illinois town you never heard of, and my father's a poor clergyman so good that it seems as if you could see the gold shine through. And my real name is Barrett Lord." As she stood speechless before him, he added cruelly, "At least I shall always have the satisfaction of knowing that I surprised you!"

"But how did my father——"

"I bowed to your father because I was so lonesome I had to speak to somebody, and he mistook me for young Dangerfield. But you needn't worry about my falling in love with you, because the last thing I intend to do is to marry a rich girl. Furthermore, I wouldn't be treated the way you treat your father—not for one instant."

The rude being looked so poetical by moonlight that she let him rant on, just for the joy of watching him.

"Your father asked me to fly down with *The Cause*, next week, and I'm still crazy to do it, in spite of you," he dared.

"Miss Bronson, the chocolate is ready," called Lizzie's voice from the house.

Hurriedly, though with dignity, they

consumed a healthy amount of hot chocolate with whipped cream, and then sought the subway. Miss Bronson was demure and quiet. Whatever else had happened, her brain storm had cleared away. Any one more femininely sweet or less radical Barrett couldn't imagine.

"You've certainly got me guessing now," he said, as he observed that she didn't object to a slow saunter from the subway to her door. "Shall I ever see you again?" he asked breathlessly.

"I don't know, Mr. Lord. But if you will call up next Friday at exactly half past six o'clock, I will tell you whether I feel justified in continuing to deceive father and whether I want you to fly down to the country for the week-end. You are on probation."

And the great, bronze doors closed behind her.

During the next six days, by dint of superhuman self-control, Barrett Lord refrained from calling up the Bronson establishment or walking by the door. He saw Enid's name in the paper, once, as addressing an open-air meeting in Madison Square, and he smiled as he noted that although her subject wasn't given, her clothes were faithfully chronicled. At times he tried to regard the Enid Bronson episode as one of those adventures of which every bachelor lays away a few for consideration in his latter, duller, safer years. Her life was so full that she had probably forgotten him with the closing of the bronze doors. And yet, she had lain in his arms. Yes, Barrett Lord, now more lonely than before, spent an uneasy week.

There were so many obstacles, even suppose she cared the way he was caring. There were her wild ideas which he wouldn't tolerate, there was his own inability to afford, as yet, the cunning little home with window boxes and fireplaces. And even suppose he was able, within a reasonable time, to afford it, he

couldn't be master of it with all her money in the way. Mr. Barrett Lord was more than usually prejudiced against money because his college roommate had married an heiress with results that were the gossip of his friends. The heiress had once gone off to Europe without mentioning the fact of her departure to her husband. Worst of all, there would be Mr. Bronson himself to consider, and his anger when he discovered that Barrett was not the son of an oil magnate.

Despite all these dire misgivings, Barrett nevertheless called up the Bronsons at exactly half past six on Friday. He might have known it! Fool! She was out of town. But the butler, who was not Hawkins, asked if it was Mr. Dangerfield, and after Barrett's shaky assent, said that Mr. Bronson wished to speak to him.

"Coming up to dinner with me, Joe?" So she hadn't given him away!

"Hahn't planned to."

"Better come along. Got a letter here for you, from Enid."

"I'll be right up."

"Did quite a little globe-trotting last Saturday night, didn't you?" queried Mr. Bronson, over the caviar, as he and Barrett sat dining alone.

"Why—er—yes, sir."

"Never heard of anything so preposterous as Enid, tired as she was, piking way out to Pelham Manor."

"I'm afraid I—"

"I don't blame you, Joe. In fact, I'm glad you went. There was something about the air of Pelham Manor that must have done her good."

"Very nice and balmy," remarked Barrett innocently.

"So it seemed," said Mr. Bronson, with emphasis. "In addition, the open-air meeting in Madison Square was such a fizzle that Enid came home and fired her secretary and announced that she was going to take a holiday. She bought a lot of unnecessary clothes

and went off to the shore with three trunks just like a regular girl. Here's a letter she left for you. I'll excuse you while you read it, Joe."

"Wish he wouldn't 'Joe' me so constantly," thought Barrett, as he opened the letter with trembling fingers.

LONELY SIR: I deliberately do not say "Dear" Sir, because after your conduct and language at Pelham, dear is the last adjective I should apply to you.

I will give you one more chance to make good, so you may fly down with *The Cause* on Saturday. That is, unless father finds out that your name isn't Joe. If he does, keep out of his way, because he is sometimes formidable, even with me. E. B.

"She wants me to fly down with *The Cause*!" exclaimed Barrett exultantly.

"I'll bet she didn't tell you where to meet Grimes," said Mr. Bronson.

"No, sir, she didn't."

"That's Enid, all over. She always leaves dates and addresses and time-tables to one's intuition. You are to be at Far Rockaway at three o'clock."

The next day was made for flying. At five minutes past three Barrett was donning leather garments, provided by Grimes, and climbing into *The Cause*. With a terrific growl from the engine, the little plane skimmed out on the blue water, and, then, disdainfully, let the world drop away. There were only two or three frightful wabbles before *The Cause* became a very bird of the air, noisier, however, than all the birds of the air put together. They flew over a toy city, which Barrett recognized as the greatest city in which, just exactly a week ago, he had been so lonely. They made for the Sound, and in less than thirty minutes they were nearly a hundred miles away, landing in the water in front of a small excited crowd, whose mouths opened with cheers which they couldn't hear on account of the roar of the machinery still in their ears.

The Bronsons, it seemed, were entertaining a large house party, each of whom had been promised a ride in *The*

Cause. A little apart from the rest, Barrett picked out Enid. She shook hands with him eagerly, as if she had been just as impatient as he, but she avoided his eyes. As soon as Grimes was ready, she wanted to make her first flight. And because she wouldn't meet his eyes, Barrett had a queer, choking, triumphant sensation that this flight of hers was a last dash for freedom.

As she put on the leather toggery Barrett had just taken off, she announced that she would be gone only half an hour. When *The Cause* rose toward the bright sky, she didn't even wave her hand to him. Not that one feels much like waving farewells, in his first flight, but still!

"I'm to amuse you until Enid gets back," remarked a girlish voice at his elbow.

And looking down, Barrett beheld Enid's roly-poly debutante sister, Hannah, who had a glorious color and a way of chuckling contagiously at nearly everything.

"We'll begin with tennis," announced Hannah. As Barrett looked at his watch and said something about having time for just one set, Hannah said: "If you think Enid will be back when she said she would, it simply shows that you don't know Enid."

After tennis, although the water was frigid, there was a wonderful swim, and after the swim there was tea in the garden at half past six. The Bronsons dined, it seemed, at half past eight.

"Daddy!" remarked Mrs. Bronson to her husband, at seven o'clock. "Don't you think it's time Enid was back?"

"Of course it is. How was I to know that she would go up in that cursed thing and stay up? Furthermore"—he leveled his fury straight at Barrett—"I thought she liked you, and wanted to see you."

"Don't mind him," whispered Margaret. "He'll blame us all in turn until she comes."

It was a little after eight when the telephone rang, with a long-distance call. A pallid house party surrounded a pallid host while he held the line.

"Engine went to smash up in the air. Anyway, they landed safely. It was Grimes on the wire. Enid hired a car and has been on her way home half an hour. But *The Cause* is a wreck."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Bronson, and promptly fainted away at the good news.

When she was restored, an uproarious crowd of twenty sat down to dinner. The family happiness, which had trembled in the balance, very mercifully had swung the right way. At ten o'clock a strange motor drove up and almost immediately Enid was remonstrating with her father to prevent his giving the man a hundred dollars.

As she sat on the veranda eating her dinner from a tray, Enid, though otherwise noncommittal, admitted that they were lucky to have landed safely.

"That was one of the shortest-lived causes you ever embarked in," said Mr. Bronson, as he went upstairs to try and calm down.

"Why did you do it?" asked Barrett, when he got her alone.

"It was all my fault," she admitted.

"I knew it!"

"I overpersuaded Grimes about flying too high."

"He shouldn't have listened to you."

"We would have been all right if the engine hadn't gone bad. He didn't take any real risks. For a little while, when it looked as if we'd never get back alive, I was frightened, thoroughly, for the first time in my life. I can't describe what it did to me. It made me appreciate things I'd taken for granted, it showed me what an out and out idiot I've always been."

She shivered involuntarily. "I can't tell you how good it is to be back." Because her hand shook so, Barrett put his on it, to steady it. "Talk about some-

thing small and prosaic and humdrum," she said tremulously.

"You know that little house with the brass knocker and the two little bay trees out in front—the house I was telling you about the other night?"

"Oh, please, don't talk about that little house!"

"Why not?"

"I'm afraid of my father."

"You're afraid he won't accept me for a son-in-law?"

"Perhaps." Her voice trailed deliciously into nothing.

"Enid, we've only seen each other twice, and it's all as crazy as crazy can be. But you knew at once, the minute we met, that we were meant for each other. Didn't you?"

"We'd better go and see father," she said. "Excuse the pun, but after being up in the air so long, I can't bear any more suspense."

Hand in hand they mounted the stairs and hand in hand they entered the courtroom.

"Enid and I want to get married, Mr. Bronson," began Barrett, brave but blinking, because he was apprehensive of a head-on collision. "Before you give us your blessing, let me explain that I'm not Joe Dangerfield——"

Ably abetted by his partner in crime, Barrett told his story picturesquely. Barrett's loneliness assumed Homeric proportions. Mr. Bronson's mistake might literally have saved his life. If he had gone on getting lonely as fast as he was going when Mr. Bronson took him in tow, it might easily have been a dive from the Woolworth Tower, or a briefer jump in front of a subway express.

"And if you decide to forgive us, I want it understood that Enid must live on my salary. Anything else is bad economics."

"Having never disciplined my family when I should have done so, I don't pro-

pose to complete the wreck by leaving them too much money. Most of my fortune goes to universities. By the way Mr.—"

"Barrett Lord."

"Mr. Lord, although I'm accustomed to swallow unpalatable facts when Enid wants me to, this is the largest order she's ever given me. How you could have the nerve!"

"Father!" Enid wormed an enticing hand into one of his clenched fists, and Mr. Bronson smiled irrepressibly, because it was the first time in a number of years that she had resorted to thoroughly feminine tactics.

"I'm not, however, surprised, because my friend Dangerfield has no children. The minute you spoke to me, I thought it was a way out for Enid. If you remember, I said, 'Here you are at last!' I put you down at a game of auction with three men who are known in the club as the Benzine Board, because they reduce every man to his lowest terms. My conference upstairs was over the telephone with the head of your firm, who is one of my best friends. I didn't know your name, but I called him up

and told him that I wanted to know confidentially all he could tell me about a young god that was working for him. Furthermore, I went through the precaution of having you discreetly followed that first evening. When you first spoke to me, I was so afraid that you really had taken me for some one you knew that I nearly lost my mind trying to think up a way to have you and Enid meet. You needn't waste any more breath asking my consent, because you had it long before you met Enid. Run along, now, Barrett. I want to write to your father, and invite him on East for a visit."

A thoughtful, sobered, though undeniably romantic pair again sought the dark end of the veranda.

"I believe that father is lots smarter than I ever gave him credit for," mused Enid, between pauses.

"We've got to hand it to the previous generation on both sides of the family," agreed Barrett. "Do you mind the sensation of having fallen in love in a plate-glass shop window?"

"Not as long as we don't have to stay in the window, dear."



GRATITUDE

I NEVER followed such a year before.

It started underneath an old oak tree
Where spring was standing on life's grass-grown floor
To unpin youth from eyes that could not see.

Then spring ran down the road. The year grew tall.

With wondering I tripped upon her train,
I was so eager to see flowers, and all,
And found new friendliness in summer rain.

Then when her gold turned brown, and stalks were dry,

When birds were gone and little voices still,

There came a beauty in the autumn sky

My soul could drink until it had its fill.

Snow now lies warm upon the year's white breast,

Great gifts she gave me; I will guard her rest.

CAROLYN HALL.

Simon

By Paul Hervey Fox

Author of "Philanderer's Progress,"
"The Idealist," etc.



THE laws of fortune, which ordained that Jason Ware should enlist himself in an unknown argosy, ordained likewise that he should die in the town that, lying in the upper reaches of a fertile mid-Western valley, bears his name and knows him as its founder.

He was one of the last of the pioneers. Under other circumstances the world might have required his spirit to build an empire or to set in motion great States. But like many men of an extraordinary brilliance, his achievement was itself an irony. He died obscurely in the quiet town which was his sole memorial, leaving behind him a daughter, a girl of seventeen named Corinna.

She had been rushed from an Eastern school at the rumor of her father's illness, a tall girl with gray eyes and a grave, possessed air. Her mother was dead, and she worshiped her father as of the race of gods.

Her earliest memories were of hardships endured by his side, hardships magically transmuted by his big laugh, his buoyant spirit, to the episodes of a romantic adventure. She had wept loudly and refused to be comforted when the necessity for education demanded her first separation from him. Her father, abashed and guilty, for days after the edict was out did not dare meet her eye.

Corinna Ware was never to forget that final picture which the acids of shock and emotion etched upon her brain. Her father lay in a room which reeked of anæsthetic odors. A sense of pain hung in the hushed atmosphere like another odor. He was dying. That strong, magnificent man with the laughing eyes, the brown beard, would never go swinging by again with great, striding limbs. She would never listen to his voice again; his voice, rich, harmonious as an orator's, stirring duller men to the pursuit of an idea, an ideal, a vision hopeless and fantastic. She would not again hear him chant rollicking songs, nor know his ardent mind, which could catch up a cold purpose, feed it with his own vigor, and give it back, breathing and living and bright with emotion.

At the end her father had put out a shaking hand, touched hers, and in a ghost of his old voice had managed to say:

"Corinna—this—I had hoped so much—Ware."

Those incoherent fragments were supplemented by a direct gaze from brooding, sad eyes. The girl in that instant had a flash of understanding which told her of fallen hopes, of hidden failures. Sharply, like a pang, it came to her that her father's fondness for her was streaked with regret that he had no son, but only a daughter who could not

push his uncompleted aims. Even this little township's ultimate progress, a keystone for vaster issues, would be defeated by his death.

Corinna dropped to her knees. Her face, dead white, with wide, unearthly eyes, stared at the head upon the pillow with a repressed intensity.

"I promise you," she said in a curiously level voice, "that I will make Ware great. I promise you it shall be the city you planned."

Relief, unuttered but made vivid with silence, filtered into Jason Ware's somber eyes. Thereafter he seemed to resign without sorrow that special ardor which leads a man to conquer with armies, to create beauty with an art, with a gift, to serve a god, to serve a woman, to suffer all things austere for an unnamed reward.

So Corinna Ware of the town of Ware grew up in loneliness, living in her father's house, revering the things he had touched, and companioned only by Martha, her father's old servant. She never spoke of what lay nearest to her heart, but unconsciously it came to rule her mind, her life. In the peaceful routine of her days she seemed to be waiting with a strange, wise patience.

And as the years trailed by, Corinna Ware grew to beauty, a fair, calm beauty of oval face and quiet eyes. She attracted few lovers, but these were attracted strangely, as if by some force in the universe over which they had no control.

From her impersonal kindness, David Austin had retreated down the world, as if to separate himself from his memories by seas and continents. Two remained. They were Richard Harrison, a simple, good-looking youth released from college, who squandered irrevocable time in Ware merely to be near her; and Jim Blake, a man of thirty-two, with a harsh face illuminated at times by an ironic smile.

Neither of these she loved. For

young Dick Harrison she had a strain of tenderness, and Blake inspired her at times with something like fear, but these mild emotions were alien to the fierceness of that urgency which her father had taught her to know as love. Yet, quite suddenly, for the fulfillment of her promise and with a fine carelessness, she offered herself like any princess in a fairy tale to either of them who won what she desired.

It transpired through the circumstances of a single crowded week.

Jason Ware had, perhaps, some high purpose in view concerned with his burning desire for the growth of the town. Corinna could only guess dimly at this which was veiled beneath her father's mysticism. It was her part, she told herself, to see that Ware became a city of parks and wide thoroughfares, of contented toilers and gracious homes. What her father had dreamed must evolve of itself.

Without prelude there had come to Corinna the opportunity to which she had dedicated herself. Rumor leaked into Ware, and grew insistent throughout the valley, creating a stir as far as the villages of Kenwick and East Forks. The great Murdock Shoe Corporation, blundering like some bulky animal through a jungle of labor troubles, of rents and impositions, had signified its intention of marching Westward. In particular this quiet valley, where land was cheap and conditions healthful, was spoken of as a site for the plant. The fortunate town selected as the home of the Murdock interests would be connected with the world by the spur of a railroad. Such a town could look forward with assurance to a prompt, miraculous advancement like the city of Aladdin, and ultimately to such civic luxuries as a department store, theaters, even a country club.

Corinna Ware considered the news thoughtfully, and quite undramatically made her sacrifice. Young Harrison,

loitering near her that warm, spring day, was swept from his feet by her calm announcement.

"You'll—you'll marry me," he said stumbingly, "if I can make these Muddock people pick Ware? Corinna, I'll do anything. Anything! John Walsh, their agent, is coming here to-morrow, I've heard." He laughed uncertainly, a little defiantly. "I'll make him settle in Ware if I have to fight him!"

His face, boyish and flushed, was turned toward hers, and she smiled at him a little wistfully.

She did not speak to Jim Blake until that evening, and in the interim a detached incident occurred. The incident was a young man, the strangest young man that Corinna had ever seen.

On a rear porch in the sunlight she was idly helping Martha shell a huge bowl of peas. Her gaze sped over the broad meadowland behind the house to the swift waters of the Halleck River, winding through thin woods down the valley. She was startled, when she looked up at a nudge from Martha, to find a stranger standing before her.

He wore an old Norfolk jacket of excellent tweed, thick, brown shoes, and he held a battered soft hat between the fingers of a very firm, tanned, and well-shaped hand. His face defied analysis. Its changing expressions, its whimsicality made it a different face every minute. A pair of light-blue eyes beamed with a child's friendliness upon Corinna.

From such an apparition, the most astonishing request might have seemed normal; his true, commonplace mission was, by the same standard, astonishing.

"Madam, have you any work for a vagrant, very much at your service? I have not walked from Chicago this morning. I have not a wife and seven children. In fact I'm afraid I haven't any children at all. But I've come all the way from Kenwick since noon to your pretty little village, and my tobacco pouch is empty."

He delivered his words with such cheerfulness, and with so complete an innocence of any knowledge that he or they were at all unusual that even solid, squat old Martha grinned up at him.

Corinna managed to say in a puzzled voice:

"You want—work? What kind of work?"

The young man threw back his head and laughed as if this were the pleasantest sort of joke.

"That's a question I could answer at length. You see," he explained in a confidential key, "I can chop wood and tune mandolins, make ballads and paint walls. I can even repair watches and tell fortunes. In fact there's hardly anything at which you'd not find me useful."

Corinna surveyed him a little bewilderedly, as if she were confronted by some amiable lunatic. Her eyes took in the details of his easy, confiding attitude, his good-humored eyes, his gestures, at once so florid and so expected. It occurred to her, with something like a shock, that this eccentric young man, for all his lack of balance, in some ways recalled her father. A faint color, a banner of anger raised against that unspoken sacrilege, sprang into her cheeks.

On the point of informing him coldly that there was no demand for any of his varied talents here, her mind changed inexplicably, and she was surprised to hear herself declare in a matter-of-fact voice:

"Well, I don't know. Perhaps the lawn needs mowing. You'll find a mower in the shed over there to the right."

The queer young man actually bowed. Corinna found herself struggling between an unmotivated irritation and a desire to laugh. She sat filling a bowl with burst pods mechanically, but her thoughts, her furtive glances, went across the sweep of green to his supple

figure bent against the lawn mower with a violent concentration. It was as if he had somehow converted the dull task into the episode of a melodrama. There was really a hint of emotion in his swift, determined movements, like a man running for a doctor, like Hercules struggling in one of his labors.

Corinna, usually so aloof, so self-sufficient, was devoured by an uncomfortable curiosity. She wanted to walk deliberately up to this human enigma, shout "Who are you?" and receive a direct answer that would satisfy her at once and permit her thereafter to ignore him. Ruled in all ways by candor, she yet found herself hunting for a subterfuge with which to approach him.

Presently, armed with a small oil can, she halted the laborer with a smile which attempted to be patronizing, and failed, wretchedly. To patronize his unconscious, assured vitality was like patronizing electricity, or Mont Blanc, or a running brook.

"That machine's making an awful racket. Don't you think it needs some oil?"

She watched him as he stooped with deft fingers and inserted oil, here, there, everywhere, in little darting movements.

"By the way," she asked idly, "what is your name?"

"I call myself Simon Gascoigne," announced the young man with almost a flourish. His eyes suddenly twinkled and he added immediately in one of his confidential outbursts: "The Simon part is mine; I picked up the Gascoigne from an old theater program."

Corinna told herself she ought to be amused, but somehow managed to be annoyed instead. His manner, his clear voice, his fine hands, were so utterly at variance with his position she felt sure he hid a deep hypocrisy. She said quickly with a little frown:

"What do you do? I don't understand. You must admit it's strange."

He gave her a troubled look.

"Why," he answered rather humbly, "I just roam about."

"But—but why?"

His face went into lines of humor. Then he said gravely, so gravely that Corinna stared at him with a serious, sympathetic attention:

"It's the old, old story of course. A woman, a girl. I chucked everything. I'm what you see because of her."

"And she didn't care? She let you go?" asked Corinna softly.

Simon Gascoigne threw back his head and laughed one of his gay, irrepressible laughs.

"Care? How could she? She doesn't exist!"

Corinna said in a cool, enraged voice: "When you are through with your work, knock at the kitchen door, and I will see that you are paid."

An expression of authentic concern crossed his face. He looked exactly like a humiliated boy.

"I didn't mean to offend you," he murmured. "Truly, I didn't. But you know people are so queer. They always ask me odd questions just because I find it pleasant to go roaming about by myself. And I haven't any story to speak of. My mother was a singer, a very good singer. As a boy I went over most of Europe. That was fine! The stuffy theater dressing rooms, the strange, evening crowds, the small cities we toured! There was a town in Italy—but I don't dare start talking of that time; I'd never stop. Well, my mother died and I came back here. I was twenty-one then. My uncle placed me in a position. A bank runner. Think of it! A bank runner! I had too many memories. It was discouraging. I get discouraged, you know. I suppose I'd never been trained for that kind of life. So I—I cleared out."

"But," Corinna said quietly, her annoyance swept away by his earnestness and simplicity, "you can't go on like this forever."

He met her eyes with worry. He

seemed on the point of denial, of affirmation, of a dozen, conflicting rejoinders, when, all at once, he said in a sober, direct voice: "I like you."

Corinna flushed, and replying some irrelevant commonplace, strolled, with a forced air of composure, back to the house. She repeated to herself that she was angry at him. She was angry at him because she did not know what to think of him. He was extraordinarily disturbing, this person, and all her poise, her accustomed calm, seemed to be destroyed in contact with his erratic individuality.

There was no cruelty in Corinna, yet she was obsessed now by a desire to hurt this young man. In some unguessed manner she felt that he had beaten her. She would not like him go away—not yet. In the kitchen she had a conference with old Martha.

"I think the hedge needs trimming, and he might spade up the garden tomorrow. Tell him, Martha, he can put up that tent in the back if he likes. And isn't there an old camp cot around somewhere?"

It was not until that evening, when Jim Blake called, that Corinna realized how completely the stranger had driven from her head all thoughts of the crisis in the affairs of Ware, and of her opportunity to fulfill supremely her obligation to her father.

She looked at Jim Blake with disfavor. His harsh mouth seemed tightened at the corners with a certain complacency. With downcast face she gave him to understand what Ware's advancement meant to her, and what form her gratitude would take.

He surveyed her without moving a muscle. Then his tongue stole out and wet his dry lips. Very slowly a grin overspread his face.

"What you want most in the world?" he echoed with a tinge of mockery.

His hand slipped across the chair arm and caught hers in a hard grasp. Her

eyes met his and spoke in silence. After a little he withdrew his hand with an awkward laugh, and rose to his feet. His face was smiling, but he swore under his breath as he unlatched the gate.

Simon Gascoigne, who had gone forth to smoke a pipe and mingle with the great world down at the Halleck House, passed him as he came out. Simon turned and stared with lips puckered in a soundless whistle. Then he went up the pathway just as old Martha appeared at the kitchen door with the rolled bulk of a tent in her arms.

Alone in the silent living room where one clock ticked off the slow seconds, Corinna sat with an opened book on her lap. She was tired and a little afraid. Across the field in the soft, evening air floated the voices of Simon and Martha. Martha seemed actually garrulous, and once, there was no doubt about it, she laughed, a thin, high, ridiculous peal. Corinna remembered that only her father had ever managed to call up one of those laughs from Martha. She listened to the careless tones of Simon Gascoigne, and she began to wish secretly that she were out there, helping the silly fellow. Martha had strange ideas about arrangement. She wouldn't know how to make him comfortable. With an effort, Corinna resisted the impulse to join them.

When she went up to bed, her head ached. Confused thoughts of Ware and the Murdock interests, of Blake and young Harrison, struggled against each other. Above them all, insistent through her dreams, there floated the picture of an intent, blue-eyed young man saying: "I like you," with a serious and engaging simplicity.

The next two days were momentous for Corinna Ware. There had appeared suddenly in the town a large and softly purring car with a large and inscrutable-faced chauffeur, and in the cushions at

the back, there lolled an extremely short, fat, jovial little man with a cigar in his mouth and an eye that was sometimes shrewd and sometimes sentimental.

He was the agent of the Murdock interests, a man prominent in the affairs of the great company. His name was John Walsh. He was seen in the company of Joshua Mellet, the wealthiest citizen in Ware. At his rooms in the Halleck House, there were frequent comings and goings. Richard Harrison was a caller there more than once, and Jim Blake had made at least one visit. Mr. Walsh appeared to be busy also at long distance. He seemed to dispatch and receive a constant supply of telegrams.

His decision, swiftly arrived at, was one which gave the deathblow to Corinna's hopes. He liked Ware and admitted as much. Two or three sites appealed to him as possibilities, but his eye, happening to take in that sweep of level land bordered by the Halleck River, which had been Jason Ware's estate, refused to look elsewhere. That was the ideal site for the Murdock plant, that and none other.

Jovial Mr. Walsh had occasion to display a decided streak of obstinacy. For Corinna, with her heart in the home that had been her father's, made it known promptly enough that nothing could induce her to part with the property. Mr. Walsh shrugged his shoulders after a brief interview with her on the subject, and to young Dick Harrison's despairing appeals, observed pleasantly but firmly that he knew what he wanted when he saw it. He had been through Kenwick already; he would now look over the ground at East Forks.

Corinna faced the situation quietly. It was an additional irony, she reflected, that her townsfolk would regard the failure of the project for Ware's advancement due to her sentimentality. But with tight lips she told herself over and over that it wasn't fair to ask her

to part with things so dear and so familiar and hallowed by the touch of the gallant spirit who had been her father. Rather than yield the simple, white house to the wrecker's gang, she would surrender even her desire to see Ware flourish and grow into a city of power, a city of beauty.

The third day brought a surprise in the shape of success. It was wholly unexpected, yet Corinna discovered the triumph stale and unstirring. Jim Blake had appeared coolly before her to announce that he had again seen the agent of the Murdock Shoe Company, and persuaded him to select Ware in the face of Corinna's refusal to sell her property.

It sounded like a miracle, and Blake was not communicative regarding the arguments he had so effectively employed. Corinna did not enjoy the advantage owned only by Milly, a waitress in the Halleck House.

When Jim Blake had entered the hotel that afternoon, he had stopped to exchange a few sentences with Milly, a fair-haired, stupid girl with a petulant mouth. She had gazed at him with unswerving eyes, and then, with a furtive movement, drawn him into the darkness of the corridor. She began to speak in swift, excited whispers.

Jim Blake put out his hand, and his steel fingers gripped her around the shoulder.

"Cut it out," he said pleasantly, and turning his back, walked leisurely up the stairs and knocked at Mr. John Walsh's door. Half an hour later, when he came out, laughing good-humoredly, he did not see the figure that stole timidly back into the unrelieved darkness of the hallway, and remained motionless in an alcove until he had passed down the stairs.

From his interview he went directly to seek Corinna. He told her his news in one blunt sentence, and holding his

arms wide, invited her acceptance of his caress.

She stepped back, thanking him with half articulate phrases. And when he did not offer to change his attitude, she murmured in a voice touched with hesitation, with panic, with repugnance:

"Not yet, Jim, not yet!"

And suddenly it seemed to her that which had previously appeared a fair return had assumed the proportions of a hateful sacrifice.

As if to reinforce her own word by the hostage of some public avowal, she let Dick Harrison know what had happened when he dropped in shortly afterward.

"You see, Dick, I told Jim what I told you. It was only fair. I'm sorry. But you'll forget so soon! You don't know."

He regarded her unsteadily with a bloodless face.

"Yes, I see," he answered in a low voice. "And I'll be going on to New York. Perhaps, perhaps I should have gone long before. But I won't forget!"

Suddenly he put his arms about her, and fiercely kissed her. Then he turned, with no word, and went quickly from the house.

In the mood that resulted from the day's happenings, Corinna Ware went to seek Simon, that harmless young man, in the study of whose erratic personality she found surcease from her troubled thoughts. She had kept him on with a smile at herself, by a dozen devices. Knives and scissors had been sharpened, rugs beaten, every conceivable sort of odd job attended to by his hands.

Her latest shift had been to hand over to his attention a battered and ancient alarm clock, spent in service, which she had discovered in the garret. He was tinkering with it cheerfully on a camp stool in front of his tent as she approached. His eyes lifted and met hers with a twinkling smile, and then with the engrossed delight of a child with a toy,

they returned to the clock, its entrails scattered on every side.

Corinna sighed with unconscious relief, and discarding dignity, sank to the ground, clasped her hands about her knees and sat watching him. She found an odd pleasure in his presence, a complete abstraction from her own concerns. And yet, curiously, there was commingled with that a faint irritation that was somehow a little laughable. He seemed so invulnerable to the ordinary distress of life, so removed from petty worries by his careless philosophy. Corinna had accused him of lack of ambition, and he had proved to her with logical exactness that the rewards of ambition are illusory. Nothing seemed to budge him from his serenity, and yet at times Corinna suspected in him what he did not suspect in himself. Like an avenger of society she half consciously desired to win his affection in order that he might be humbled by the very forces he disdained.

"Do you know," he had said once, pondering the matter with wondering eyes, "I never before stayed in one place for more than forty-eight hours—not even jail. And yet I'm still here!"

"Why don't you try staying in one place for a long time?" she suggested. "You might like it."

"Ah!" he said. "There you have explained everything. I should like it. Of course! In fact I'm almost sure I'd grow comfortable and develop those ridiculous ambitions you approve of, and end in a kind of stagnant respectability by doing what other people thought praiseworthy instead of what I enjoyed myself."

Best of all, Corinna liked to hear him talk of his travels, and the strange people he had met. He was an engrossing talker when he grew interested. In a phrase he could make a vivid picture and point it with some novel turn of words. At such times he would become oblivious to his audience. His

voice harrangued the grass, the trees, the birds, and with eyes staring into the unseen, he would lose himself in memories colored by time to the hues of fantasy and romance. Corinna could visualize him, a delighted, receptive boy, flying over half Europe with his artist mother; and the episodes of their life as he related them appeared before her with a reality as piercing her own recollections of stormy wanderings up and down the land with her irrepressible father.

The light still held, and Simon tinkered hopefully at the clock, pausing from time to time to throw out a fragmentary remark.

"Isn't it strange," he observed presently, "how stupid most decent people are! Half of Ware has been hunting that Murdock man like a snark, and bored the poor fellow to death talking of water power and labor and things like that. And naturally he has decided against Ware. Wanting this property is just a pretext of his, of course."

The memory of Blake was for the moment, dim in Corinna's mind, and she answered as she might have done had the success of the project still been unknown to her:

"But what else could they have done? Who could have done any better?"

"I could," said Simon in a surprised voice, pausing with an uncoiled spring in his hand.

"You?" Corinna laughed at him.

He joined in cheerfully, and then all at once, his face grew solemn, and he answered gravely: "But I could, you know."

"Very well. How?"

"Ah!" Simon ejaculated. "I should have to think that out. And thinking is such a lot of trouble."

"You're impossible!" declared Corinna, rising. "Besides, I might as well tell you that the Murdock Company is to settle in Ware."

"Then some one has done some think-

ing, after all," Simon remarked conclusively.

A retort rose to Corinna's lips, but she told herself it was as preposterous to quarrel with him as with a child. And she said instead, as she strolled off:

"By the way, I've found that book you were speaking about yesterday. If you care to look at it, come over to the house later on."

Dusk began to descend, and presently Simon put away the mangled remains of the alarm clock, and clapping his hat on his head, sauntered down to the Halleck House to purchase some tobacco.

The girl who was temporarily behind the desk was familiar to Simon. They had hitherto exchanged sallies, and she had rewarded his quietest statements with a giggle.

"How are you this evening, Milly?" he asked pleasantly. "And what a fine evening it is, to be sure! Do you suppose, as a personal favor, without saying anything to any one, that you could spare me, without inconvenience, some tobacco?" He sent a coin spinning into the air.

But Milly did not giggle this time. Her eyes were sullen and heavy-lidded, and silently, without warning, they began to overflow.

Simon stared at her with an opened mouth exactly as if she were a ghost.

"My dear, what's the matter?" he asked. "You're unhappy. What a world! Tell me."

Old man Waring, proprietor of the Halleck House, thrust a red, unseeing face through the aperture of the doorway.

"Milly, you can go home now. I'll put Bill on. And say, don't forget——" His voice mumbled some indistinct directions.

Simon beamed brightly across the glass cigar case at Milly's averted face.

"Suppose," he said, as if struck by a superb idea, "suppose we take a walk!"

It was quite late before he returned

to the Ware household. He strode hurriedly, swinging his arms, and his eyes were wide. Corinna Ware, a little cool after the apparent rejection of her invitation, put aside that attitude after a glance at his face.

"What has happened?" she demanded.

"I suspected him all along. I never trust men who keep their hands hidden. Do you? Poor Milly! A charming girl in her way, but perhaps a little uncouth. Yet who am I to criticize her? She waits and clerks and sweeps and half a dozen things besides down at the Hal-leck House. I dare say you know her. A dear, good girl. But—yes—perhaps a trifle uncouth."

"What on earth are you talking about?" Corinna interrupted with puzzled eyes.

"Milly told me."

"Told you what?"

"Told me what?" Simon echoed in a far-away, absent-minded voice. "Oh, of course! That was what I was coming to. You see, she's a charming girl, though a little——"

"Uncouth!" cried Corinna.

"The exact word!" declared Simon gratefully. "And this man Blake, it appears, promised Walsh, the Murdock fellow, you know, an option on your property if Walsh would say nothing about it."

"Will you say that over again?" Corinna asked. "I don't understand. You have such a strange way of putting things!"

"I have, haven't I?" agreed Simon. "There's not much to explain, though. Blake told Walsh that he expected, later on, to have enough influence with you to induce you to sell this property. Walsh promised to say nothing about it for the time being, and only state that the Murdock interests had pitched on Ware due to Blake's persuasion."

Corinna's fingers sought and gripped a chair back. She understood now. Blake, marrying her on a pretense of

victory, would thereafter attempt to force her, as his wife, to fulfill his secret bargain and dispose of house and land to the Murdock corporation.

Corinna was trembling. She was aware of the workings of a blind and furious despair. All the anxieties of these last few days, which had carried her aspirations to a summit, sought reaction in one impulse of anger. Under the sway of an emotion which made her feel solitary and helpless in a world of lies and scheming selfishness, she directed her wrath perversely upon Simon.

"So you've found your level," she said in a voice that cut like a well-flicked whip, "and spent your evening listening to the absurd stories of a cheap waitress? You amused me for a while, but the society of fools is never tolerable for long." Her voice lost its calm precision; it went up in miserable appeal, "My father wanted so much to see Ware grow, and I promised him I would make it into a city when my chance came. I wanted that more than anything else in life. More than anything, I tell you! And I've had to face treachery and folly. I've failed, though I did the best I knew how. But you're all so worthless. You're all the same. Oh, go, go! Leave me alone. I never want to see you again."

Color had streamed from the young man's face. He was deathly white. Corinna saw suddenly what she had done, and a pang of swift remorse added to her wretchedness. She sought even then to say something that would retract or explain those bitter and unjust sentences. Yet even as she stood there, his hand went out in a wavering, stricken gesture. His face, sensitive and wounded, peered at her through the dimness with a strange look. Then he whirled noiselessly and vanished through the doorway.

Corinna Ware showed to the morning

sun a careworn expression. She had stayed up until late to write, and then had slept badly. Martha was intrusted with the personal delivery of two very carefully drafted letters, one of which was addressed to J. R. Blake, and the other to the jovial agent of the Murdock forces.

Sharpest of all Corinna's regrets was the cruelty she had shown toward Simon. She had not realized that he would take it in quite that way. She told herself that he was the least important item in the catalogue of her wretchedness, yet from his pale, hurt face her mind found no escape.

All at once she happened to notice that his tent was down. On the rear porch it was visible, rolled in a compact bundle. To Corinna's query, Martha, shaking her head, could offer only the information that Simon had apparently risen and left before dawn.

Corinna returned to the living room, startled and incredulous at a sudden self-revelment. For at the thought that he had gone, that she would not see him again, her very heart stood still. She said to herself furiously that she was not in love with this amiable, absent-minded rover, even as she knew that above all things she desired to speak to him once more. Nothing else mattered. If only she might see him, and learn that he did not hate her for what she had done, she could face her wasted hopes bravely.

She was still sitting there in miserable inaction when through the thin curtains, where the sunlight came dancing, she perceived a figure cross the street directly in front of the house and continue his way upon the other side. It was Simon. The realization that he had deliberately gone out of his way to avoid proximity even to the house smote her like a blow. Corinna sat rigid for an obstinate, bitter moment. Then she jumped to her feet, threw open the front door, and called to him, incoherently

and in a voice that was a little desperate. He swung around hesitatingly, and then slowly came toward the house.

Corinna retreated, and hot and cold, awaited him with emotions that were at war. One moment she hated him for returning. The next she trembled with a baseless fear that he had changed his mind and gone on. She looked up to see him standing before her at last, very silent, clearly sad.

"I'm sorry," she said in a low voice. "I didn't mean any of those things."

"That's—that's all right," he answered stumbingly. "I didn't know that the Murdock affair meant so much to you. This morning I—well, you'll hear later."

"Hear what?"

"Oh, I—I fixed things."

"Fixed things? I don't understand."

Simon wriggled in embarrassment. "Oh, nothing much. I mean about Walsh. I got him to agree to build in Ware."

That triumph of her wishes which had seemed so poor a thing from the lips of Jim Blake came now to Corinna with the high thrill of success she had pictured. For the first time she realized the queer competence, the concealed ability, of the man before her. In the face of that revelation she felt suddenly humble.

"Will you tell me how?" she asked.

"I can't express any thanks. I owe you too much for words."

Simon's eyes fell upon hers and remained there. But he spoke with more animation.

"Why, I thought out something. Nothing much. Just an idea. And of course, I let Walsh think it was his own. People always like that better, you know. I asked him if Ware suggested anything connected with shoes. He laughed and said it was too bad that Ware wasn't spelled in another way. And then I worked him around to think-

ing up the slogan I'd thought up already: *Made at Ware and Made to Wear*. He was quite excited. You can't imagine. He wanted to telegraph right away. He was out of sorts when I first came in. He was reading a letter and he said something about getting out of this mess of small-town politics. And now he thinks Ware is the only possible place, and he'll take whatever site he can get. So I gave him a couple of other ideas, and he offered me a job in his advertising department, and I came away."

Corinna tried to speak quietly, but her tremulous voice betrayed her.

"You're the cleverest man I've ever met except my father."

He turned red to the roots of his hair, attempted to smile, and then fumblingly held out his hand.

The rest was pure pantomime. She ignored those outstretched fingers, and Simon gazed at them with an air of surprise as if he wondered to whom they belonged. Her eyes fell, and the stillness was eloquent of many things. And then they came to each other, quite naturally, without thought, without hesitation.

"My dear, my dear!" said Simon softly. His eyes were gleaming like the eyes of a dreamer, but his voice was the voice of a convert to the illusions of ambition and the stagnation of respectability.



LOVE AT THE DOOR

IF Love came tapping at your door,
Would you not bid him enter in,
Knowing his feet were spent and sore,
Seeing his raiment torn and thin?

Would you not take him to your breast,
And kiss his weary lips and eyes,
And beg of him to have his rest
In your warm arms, in tender wise?

Or would you keep your door shut tight,
Guarded with many bolts and bars,
Bid him begone into the night
Beneath the inexorable stars?

I come as Love. My starving heart
Is as a beggar worn and thin;
Will you not hold the door apart
And tell me I may enter in?

CLINTON SCOLLARD.

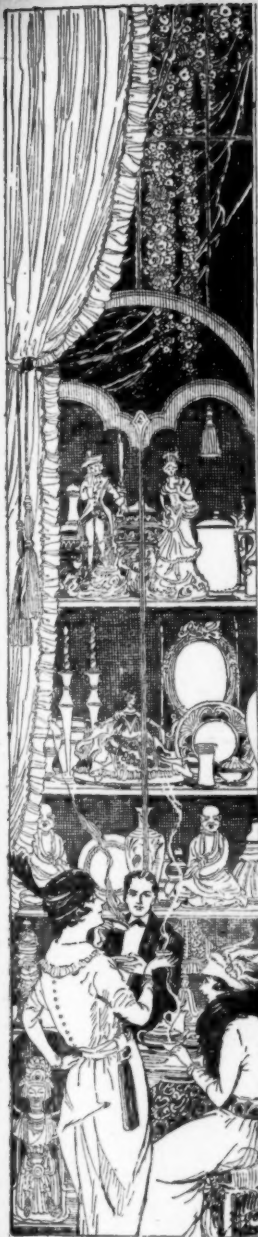
THE TEAPOT SHOP

By Mary Brent Whiteside

SQUAT luster mandarins are in a row,
With puffy cheeks of red-brown glaze,
And heavy-lidded eyes, whose sleepy gaze
Lifts not nor quickens at the passing show.
Destined beyond a doubt to grace
The quaint, exotic, cozy place
Of some of those who always are
Fond seekers after the bizarre.
And here, on frosty afternoons,
What time a bubbling kettle croons
Its song of cheer,
Their ample robes and flowing sleeves,
Though many a smile each one receives,
Will strike a fashion note less queer,
Than other styles exploited here.

The shelf above holds fragile things from France,
With famous pottery marks beneath,
And scattered roses or a Dresden wreath,
Held by pink infants cherubic, who dance
On vague blue air; tints not too bold,
And all the handles burnished gold.
Next are some sober English things
Of blended green-blue colorings,
Yet generous of girth, and meant
For something more than ornament—
A corner that
Invites repose, and paneled walls,
Where softened amber lamplight falls,
And near the fire, on a mat,
A placid, dozing tabby cat.

Octagonal pots of Austrian make
With hectic splashes deeply dyed,
Jostle a neutral Dutchman on one side,
What time he flies for life and safety's sake,
In flapping coat and wooden shoes,
Bearing a squawking stolen goose.
Japan contributes to the list,
Deep purple blues—not amethyst,
But something near; plump shapes to hold
That nation's brew of palest gold.
All this, that we
In clinging gowns of tricolette,
Or well-pressed trousers, may forget
All cares, whatever they may be,
Over a cozy cup of tea.



The Middle of the Tale

By Valma Clark

Author of
"Ye Nut Brown Maid,"
"The Grin," etc.



IT gave me the oddest, caught-up feeling to be standing there in Andrea Keppel's room in this utterly remote Canadian camp, five years after her death. The pine tree, which had grown up against the one big window, was entirely still; it inked the sunlight from the room and shut away the view of the island—mongrel yellow rocks and blue waters of Georgian Bay beyond. Inside, the room was as Andrea must have left it: moccasins by the bed ready to slide into, fishing tackle dumped in the corner, a small rifle, resting on an improvised rack on the wall, with a wicked brown-mottled snakeskin trailing beneath.

I stepped softly about, investigating. There were books on the table, three of them, a strange choice for a girl: Whitman's "Leaves of Grass," a collection of Bret Harte's stories, a volume entitled "Wilderness Homes." The stack of blank writing paper was white, unmonogrammed, man-size. The underwear piled in a half-open drawer of the chiffonier was balsam scented and tailor made, like a man's. It was not a feminine room, but then, Andrea had certainly not been feminine in the modern sense of being either inconsistent or diminutively dainty.

It had happened in the summer of the year I met Derrick Keppel. That year he had done Harvard to my Wellesley, and his battle-gray roadster and a kindly aunt or two of my own, conveniently located in Boston, were the connecting links. I had known the bare fact, as had every one else back home, that Derrick's sister, Andrea, had been drowned from a sailing canoe up North

at the Keppels' Georgian Bay camp. The details I had never heard. Even now that Derrick and I were married, I guessed that he could not bear to talk of his sister, and respected his reticence. And yet, I could not stay away from Andrea's room.

Always, beyond everything else, I've wanted to lead a normal, healthy life. Yet times when I've been ill, nights when I've been overtired—It's partly nerves, of course, but any one who's ever shuddered awake, as I have, under the fear of clutching hands, will understand.

Vegetating up here—Derrick had opened the camp, after these many years, because it was quite the most out-of-the-way spot either of us could think of—playing out-of-doors with Derrick, who's the most normal boy a girl could well ask for, I'd hoped to add a few layers to that thin-skinned sensitiveness of mine. And now, here I was with Andrea fast becoming a brand-new obsession! Although her name was never mentioned, I found a dozen traces of Andrea Keppel about the camp in the course of one day. And at night Andrea Keppel was the center of a hodgepodge of troubled dreams.

I remembered her, of course, from college days, when a careless nod from Andrea was enough to turn any one of us breathless; it was not because she was a senior, but because this leisurely, free-moving goddess seemed to us freshmen, scuttling to bells, inexplicably in this place "master of her fate." Sculptors say that a beautiful body and a beautiful face seldom go together. Perhaps Andrea's face was not beauti-

ful; perhaps it was even ugly. With its heavy pallor against closely bound black hair, with its wide, red mouth, I found Andrea's face at least arresting. But that splendid, mobile, uncorseted body of hers was a thing one did not forget. She was built like a Greek statue, a little over life size. True, she had nothing of the gracious, broad-browed dignity of a Venus de Milo. I see her yet, in her cap and gown on commencement day, looking merely impatient as she scowled out at a packed chapel.

Behind the stillness of her pallor there was passion and a vivid love of danger; Andrea Keppel's college escapades, so wild that even her admirers thought her a little mad, testified to her fierce revolt against rules and her daring. There was nothing petty or wishy-washy about Andrea. Her actions were clean-cut; she blew either hot or cold, with never a lukewarm compromise. She was splendid, in a way. And yet, with all her merry dare-deviltry, her audacious shrugging of shoulders in the face of New England authority, she was, even then, a tragic figure. No wonder Andrea Keppel had got hold of me. Standing there in her room—the room that was downright as a boy and pathetic as a little, intimate chapel—I admitted, with my nerves edged, that there was something about Andrea, something about this place, something about the old Indian cook—

At that moment Derrick, somewhere outside, whistled my name in the way he has, and I knew he was coming, two steps at a time. I got out of Andrea's room as swiftly as possible, noiselessly closed the door behind me, and spied the departing back of Minnie, the cook! I knew instinctively that she had been listening beside Andrea's door.

"Minnie," I called sharply, "what are you doing here?"

She might have been deaf, for any

effect my words had upon her. Yet I knew her hearing was keen; although she made a practice of never answering my questions, I'd watched her and had seen that she was alert to the merest ripple of a paddle.

"You've no right to be here," I flung out pettishly at that wide, vanishing back. Not a creak answered me. For all her sluggish weight of flesh, Minnie had the Indian faculty of covering space silently. I was annoyed. Somehow, I didn't want Derrick to know I'd been prowling through Andrea's room.

As I stepped into my own room to powder my nose, I was annoyed with myself that an untidy Indian woman should be able to disturb me. Yet why should she be spying on me? I went back over past clews; there was nothing definite, just little things. That very morning, when Derrick had picked me up in his arms after our swim and had raced with me to the kitchen for the doughnuts we could smell frying, the look of sullen hatred I had glimpsed on Minnie's face, beyond Derrick's shoulder, had terrified me. Hatred like that was not to be accounted for wholly by the fact that we were both dripping water over a kitchen which was not too clean.

"Derrick," I said afterward, "I don't like that Minnie person. I don't think she likes us."

Derrick laughed at me. "She's been with us for years," he reassured me. "Minnie's fond of me. It's just her Indian way."

"She's uncanny," I objected. She stays sloppy Indian squaw until she opens her mouth, and then she turns English. She speaks the language too well. And her voice is oiled."

"You don't half appreciate Minnie," replied Derrick lightly. "A voice like Minnie's is a find, in an Indian woman. Most of 'em talk like pigs. Minnie's voice may be a bit guttural, but it's not harsh. You'll have to admit it slides.

Her real name is Minoway; means 'Magic Voice' or something like that."

"Huh! She might be twenty-five or forty-five," I switched cattishly. "How old is she, Derrick?"

"Darned if I know, Melly," he answered. "She's not so old, though." Derrick turned thoughtful with that, and our discussion of Minnie petered out.

Derrick's defense of the woman was all very well, but I remembered another small episode that had to do with Huya, Minnie's son. Huya was as attractive to look at as his mother was unattractive. A slim, young Indian lad of fifteen or thereabouts, he invariably wore a khaki shirt, open to the waist, and soft, drab-colored corduroy trousers, and you knew he wore nothing else. Huya went off into the bush alone for days at a time. He was a beautiful, silent, wild thing—shy, minklike. I'd wondered what sort of person Huya's father had been, for there was no father in evidence; I'd concluded that the subject of Huya's father was not to be inquired into too closely.

On a starlit evening when I sat with Derrick and strummed old Southern songs on my banjo to him, I saw Huya creeping close in the shadow of the porch. I gave no sign that I knew, only kept on strumming and singing snatches. After he had listened a long time, Huya vanished.

I'd struck up an old college favorite, when the boy suddenly vaulted the porch rail and stood there offering me something. He'd showed a tendency before to do things for me in his shy way. Derrick scratched a match as I held out my hand. It was a woven basket full of huckleberries—such huckleberries!—great purple beads.

"But, Huya, where did you find them?" I exclaimed. The boy stood over us and laughed delightedly.

It was while Huya sat poised on the porch rail ready for flight and while

I was staining my lips in the dark with the purple berries, that Derrick spoke abruptly from behind his cigarette. "It's a darned shame!" he said to me; "the boy ought to be educated, Melly."

Somehow, I couldn't agree with Derrick. For all his niceness, Derrick cannot be made to feel that there are silver days and gold days, violet days and saffron days; he's laughed at me when I've accused great, heavy, pallid magnolia blossoms of dripping sensuousness. Hard to make Derrick understand, but I felt it a shame to tame a creature like Huya. "I don't know," I murmured; "they'd probably make him over into a—a social favorite."

Huya as a social favorite distinctly called for a laugh. But Derrick had turned to the boy. "Listen, Huya," he was saying, "how'd you like to go back to the city with us and get education? 'Prep' school and then college—football and——"

At that moment a tense, throaty voice cut into Derrick's mounting enthusiasm, and we turned to find that Minnie was one of us. "You go, Huya!" she ordered.

Huya slid to the ground and was gone.

She turned on Derrick. "Huya will not go to the city. Huya will not go to school. Huya will stay here. Minnie hates——"

"S all right, Minnie," soothed Derrick quickly. "Huya stays. I'm a blooming bonehead. S all right."

"Superstitious things, Indians," Derrick told me afterward. "But I suppose she would feel that way." And not another thing could I get out of him.

These incidents passed through my mind—as memory flashes will—in the space of three dabs of the powder puff. Whereupon I gave Minnie and Minnie's spying up, and turned with relief to Derrick. Derrick stormed in, all boyish enthusiasm about something, and

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idea.

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seized me. I gathered that he had an idea.

"Stop pummeling, Derry!" I begged when I could. "I can't understand a thing. Let's go down to the living room and talk like human beings."

Some one, it seemed, had told Derrick of a small river with rapids; had suggested that doing the rapids in a canoe was a feat not too dangerous, and had added the lure of an inaccessible small lake beyond where the trout fairly crowded each other out.

"You're such a darned good scout, Melly," he wound up. "That's the best of you. It's just sport—safe enough. We can make it a camping trip. Five days. What?"

"Yes, I've always been a good sport," I murmured. I knew my Derrick, and I knew I was in for it.

Derrick is, first of all, a sportsman. Now, there are two types of sportsmen. There's the native-born sportsman who just naturally goes off to the woods alone; and there's the civilized sportsman who takes his sports socialized, who cultivates skill in golf as carefully as he acquires a taste for oysters in the half shell. The latter is a player of games. He must have competition and he must have an audience. His kill must have the appreciation of the world; if he goes off to hunt woodchucks, he will bring back the tails as proof to you. Your civilized sportsman is a "good sport," which means that he is a game loser and a modest winner, always before a crowd. With all wifely respect to Derrick, I must admit that he is this second type of sportsman, and that I, Melly, have taken over for the rest of my natural life the rôle of Derrick's audience. Now, the chief requirement of an audience, even an audience of one, is that it be on hand for the star's performance.

Moreover, Derrick judges a girl, first and last, by one standard: is she a good sport? Can she thread a worm onto a

hook without screaming? Can she keep up with him on the trail without bothering; follow him noiselessly, like a good little dog, and stop when the birds get up? No woman, of course, is really a good sport, but most women are good bluffers where the men they love are concerned; and your Derricks are not subtle—they will never detect the bluff so long as you make the effort. To explain, Derrick had once, at a house party, seen me dive before I'd learned to swim. True, he'd had to rescue me, but he'd liked my sporting spirit and my incompetence. He never knew that the dive was accidental, that I was merely posing when some one pushed me off. After that I needed Derrick's instruction in diving. Many's the prayerful dive I've taken since, always in deathly fear of strangling. Derrick's a dear boy, you understand; he's not unduly conceited—just a normal male. He sees subtleties when they're pointed out to him; he's conventional without knowing that he is; chiefly, he's been brought up to play ball and to do good teamwork. And if Derrick could play ball, couldn't Derrick's wife? Far be it from me to shatter his illusions about myself! I tied a mental rock to the fear I was feeling and sank rock and fear together into the seething whirlpool I visioned. We fell to planning.

That evening at the table, while Minnie was shuffling out very good food to us, Derrick talked of the trip, and, surprisingly, Minnie registered interest.

"You go up the river of Nodin?" she asked incredulously.

"Yes," Derrick replied.

"She goes up, too?" with a shrug for me.

"Yes. You know it, Minnie?" he questioned.

Deliberately she set the plate of biscuits down before she answered. Her face turned sullen again.

"No," she denied at length. I'd a feeling she lied.

Derrick buttered a hot biscuit lavishly. "You fix us good eats, eh, Minnie?" he appealed.

Minnie folded her arms over her stomach. "Minnie makes blueberry muffins," she suggested.

Derrick's been known to finish twelve blueberry muffins at a sitting. "Good girl!" he agreed gayly. "A bit bulky, but we'll take you up!"

"Minnie approves. She's growing almost garrulous," he laughed, after the woman had waddled out.

And she certainly had warmed a few degrees, for afterward, when I went out into the kitchen to give instructions about provisions—Derrick wanted to start on the next day—she broke her usual stolid silence to ask irrelevantly:

"Has he showed you the birch canoe?"

"No." I was mystified.

"You want to see the birch canoe?"

I agreed.

Minnie led me out and down the kitchen path to a small shed close to the water. She opened the door wide to let in the last of the daylight, and there, turned crosswise to fit into the small space, was a slim, beautiful canoe made of the bark of the silver-birch tree. I knew instantly that I had never in my life seen a canoe to equal this delicate, masterly thing; wooden canoes, all other canoes, were to this one as a lumbering dray horse is to a thoroughbred. It appealed to me as a rare old violin would. The person who built this bark canoe knew all about the silver music of streams and the shyness of slender wild things, and built it to harmonize. I could see it riding still waters at dusk.

Minnie stroked the curved side with a knotted hand. "Beautiful!" she murmured. "See, no flaw." She might have been a saleswoman displaying her wares.

"But why hasn't Derrick showed me?" I demanded.

Minnie shrugged.

"I like this canoe. It must be easy to paddle," I reflected.

"Like a skimming swallow," nodded Minnie. She brought out long, narrow-bladed Indian paddles to show me.

"Why shouldn't we paddle this on the trip?" I asked.

"Huh!" she grunted.

"I'll ask Derrick," I decided. "And, Minnie, tell Huya to put it out on the water for me to try."

"Huya's gone," she answered. "It weighs like a sea gull's feather. Minnie will carry it."

Derrick seemed not to share my enthusiasm for the birch canoe. "But where did you get it, Derry? You can't buy them like that! And why haven't you told me before?"

"I—I don't know," he answered lamely.

"Let's take it to-morrow," I begged eagerly.

"No, better not," he vetoed quickly.

"But why, Derry; what's the matter with it?"

"Nothing," he admitted. "It's only that——"

"It's only what?" I prompted impatiently.

"Nothing."

I don't know what possessed me to go on with it. "You're always a good sport, Derrick. You're not afraid?" I taunted.

He flushed hotly. "Rather a nasty one, that. Your innig, Melly. The birch canoe it is!"

"Please, Derry boy, I didn't mean it," I whispered in his ear. "I'm sorry."

But it was in the birch canoe, scientifically loaded and balanced, that we set forth the following morning. Minnie actually watched us off, although her face, as usual, expressed nothing. My own enthusiasm had lapsed. I was feeling ragged out from one of my bad nights, with absurdly jumbled dreams of Andrea and Minnie and all the oth-

ers. But Derrick included even the birch canoe in his high spirits of the morning. "Jove, she sure does push easy!" he exulted as we left the island behind us.

As I look back at it, I acknowledge that, knowing even as little as I did at that time, I still should have allowed for Derrick's overconfidence where it is not so much a matter of sheer strength as of expert wrist movement and technique. For after all, though Derrick was a real factor on the varsity football team, he's spent a very small part of his life in camp and must be a comparative amateur in the handling of a canoe.

We camped that night on the mainland at the mouth of the river some three miles from the first rapids. Derrick hauled up the canoe, put up his pup tent, made balsam beds for us, and fixed things, as far as possible, for an early morning start, before he finally built a fire from the wood I'd collected.

With dusk softening the blaze of a blood-orange Georgian Bay sunset behind jagged Western pines, and with the business of supper over, we heaped more logs onto the fire and relaxed to the long evening before us. It was a lonely place; our own camp some fifteen miles southward was the nearest link with the world of men. Given two people—preferably a man and a girl not long married—there's no place like a cheerfully crackling camp fire at the edge of big woods for confidences. I was not surprised when Derrick began to talk of Andrea.

"See that big oak?" he asked abruptly, pointing out a great, twisted skeleton of a tree which stood alone on an island opposite, against the dulled orange sky.

I nodded. I'd marked it before as the only oak I'd seen in this land of pines and birches.

"Her body was washed ashore there."

"Oh," I said softly.

6

"And Carlo's body, the Indian chap, her guide, you know," he added, after a time. "It gets you, sooner or later—canoe sailing," Derrick continued harshly. "You'll venture a little farther each time. There's something about the dash of waves and the sweep of high winds in the big bay beyond that lures you out of your tame little bay. Andrea had that gambler's streak in her. She loved the excitement. But I never will understand why Carlo took her out that day. It was wild, with that yellow light in the sky that means hell. With his instinct for storms, Carlo must have known. It was Andrea who insisted, I suppose," Derrick finished wearily, as though he had gone over the ground countless times before.

For a long time there was no sound but the wash of slow waves from the open bay somewhere beyond the big oak tree and night creakings from the brush behind us. Finally, out of my smug happiness, I remember saying:

"And there was no one Andrea cared for, was there? She missed all this. As though life says to maiden ladies: 'So much you may have, beginnings and endings. The great middle, the heart of life, you cannot have without your Derrick.' Andrea had only the beginning and the ending."

Derrick's face was thoughtful in the flare of the match as he lit his old brier. "Sometimes," he told me slowly, "sometimes I've thought Carlo was in love with Andrea in his doglike Indian way. Andrea, of course, never knew it. An odd sort of chap, he was, a Dartmouth man who'd come back to the woods and reverted to type, taken a squaw, and all that. Summers up here, from the time she was a little girl, he'd looked out for Andrea. We trusted him completely; counted on him to keep her out of danger. He was a fascinating cuss, too, with all that still-savage stuff in him coated over with white-man chivalry. He'd always have been safe

enough. He'd been out in the world long enough to know how inaccessible Andrea was to him."

"But I remember once, when a cramp had caught Andrea in the water and he'd got her out, the look on Carlo's face as he crouched over her. Then there was another time when I'd one of the college chaps up visiting me." Derrick thrust the end of a dry branch into the fire and watched the flame creep toward him. "Andrea turned Carlo down to go paddling with Jerry. Carlo watched them get into the canoe; then he turned and deliberately snapped the paddle he held in two and stalked away."

"And you think Andrea didn't know?" I murmured.

"You see, Carlo had brought Andrea up," Derrick explained, "taught her all the woodcraft she knew. Andrea made allowance for a natural jealousy. She understood him and she trusted him utterly. Why, that time her gun went off and shot her through the shoulder, Carlo was the only one she'd let near her. He dressed it; he was terrifically gentle. It was amazing the way Andrea got on with Carlo and Carlo's wife—until that last summer," Derrick added reflectively. "That last summer I used to catch them quarreling sometimes. At least, Andrea would quarrel at him in the fierce, passionate way she had. Carlo just took it with a kind of sardonic sullenness."

"Oh, they quarreled!" I exclaimed.

"Yes. But then, Andrea was either edgy or silent that summer," admitted Derrick. "I've thought since she must have been half ill. Nerves, probably."

Derrick finished the picture he had sketched for me with two swift strokes. "They were in the birch canoe," he added somberly. "We found that farther up the shore."

"Oh!" I murmured. "So it was Carlo who made the birch canoe for Andrea!"

"We found them locked together," Derrick's voice caught ever so slightly. "Carlo must have done his darnedest to save her."

Suddenly I rose. "Derry," I said, "I wonder whether you're not a stupid old dear."

Derry was puzzled.

Derrick's feeling for his sister, I thought, as I looked down at him, was one of the fine things about him; not for the world would I have laid hands on that feeling. And Derrick would not understand. But as I took a deep breath and looked up at the stars, I was feeling absurdly light-hearted about Andrea; with all my pity for her gone, I felt, with relief, that Andrea would stop haunting me.

Yet Andrea did not stop haunting me. Never shall I forget that night. Seething waters with Andrea's pallid face leaning out from some quiet, dim shore beyond my reach; wide-eyed with horror, she was trying to tell me something across the roar of the rapids. Always at the crucial moment I awoke, to lie there feverishly hot, listening to those stealthy creakings in the bushes about us. The climax came with the recurrence of the old nightmare—clutching hands, white like foam, stretched agonizingly from mad, whirling waters. I screamed. "They were my own hands!" I was sobbing incoherently. "Take me home, Derrick! I'm afraid."

"S all right, Melly. Too much toasted cheese," he diagnosed it practically.

But even morning and pungent hot coffee and Derrick's teasing could not take away the horror of the night. "Derrick," I said somberly, "I've a feeling— Let's—go back."

Derrick, rolling up our blankets army fashion, laughed at me good-naturedly.

It was because I trailed him with growing uneasiness as he caught up a

load and made for the canoe that I saw the thing at the moment Derrick did.

"Good Lord!" he ejaculated, bending over the boat. There was an interval during which we both stared at the great curved slit in the bottom of our canoe.

When Derrick looked up his lips were white with anger. "It's a damned dirty trick," he gritted out. "Some one——"

"But who?" I asked weakly.

And then I made a discovery. "Derrick," I exclaimed, "it's a crescent moon! Don't you see? It looks like a symbol." We examined it closely. Clearly this crescent gap was no child's play. The bark was as clean-cut as though a razor blade had been used; there was perfect regularity that spelled sureness of touch.

"There'll be tracks," announced Derrick grimly, pushing his hair from his forehead. And it was at that moment that we made another discovery. Derrick had run the canoe up, clear of the water, onto one of those mud stretches found rarely on that rock-bound shore. The soil was moist from the rivulets of a small spring, so that our own footprints, Derrick's large, rubber-soled ones and my smaller ones, were absolutely distinct. There was no third footprint! We stared at each other. "My God!" whispered Derrick.

We limped back into camp that evening. The gash being in the bow of the canoe, we'd found we could keep it clear of the water by huddling together in the stern. It was a cramped, silent trip. Derrick, who had no scientific explanation to offer, and who had no code for unseen foes, had turned stubbornly taciturn as a balked small boy.

Huya and Minnie met us on the dock. Minnie stood gaping at the crescent slit. Then Huya turned on his mother:

"You let them take *that* canoe?"

Minnie snarled at him. "How should I know? The forest gives birch trees

and spruce gum to mend canoes. Stupid white man," she shrugged. Her fierceness relaxed to sullen blankness. She turned and, on flat feet, waddled back to the house.

Huya stared after her, then turned to Derrick and spoke gently: "Birch canoe is too light for the rapids."

"You mean we'd have—spilled?" asked Derrick.

The boy nodded.

"Derrick," I said, when we were alone, "that woman wanted us to take the birch canoe. Why?"

"Minnie couldn't have known the danger," answered Derrick soberly. "She's loyal, absolutely, for all her queeriness. Didn't I tell you? Minnie is Carlo's squaw."

"Oh! So that's it!"

"Funny business!" Derrick dismissed it. "But never you mind, Melly; we'll do those rapids yet. Only we'll stick to the good old basswood canoe, eh?"

It was that night, after Derrick was asleep, that I crept into Andrea's room. In an inconspicuous drawer of the table I found the little birch basket with a crescent moon pricked out of porcupine quills upon its cover. I smoothed out one of the tightly folded papers which the basket held and recognized Andrea's large scrawl.

I cannot stay alone any longer. Things terrify me. The screech of a loon flying North—the moonlight shining in—even the wind in the pine tree by my window—When I am with you I am afraid of nothing—nothing. Carlo—Carlo, my dear—

There I stopped. After a time, I touched the folded papers to the candle flame and watched them burn out on a little brass tray. Derrick would never have understood Andrea's passion for a red man. But it was all right. The final chapter of their drowning was not a tragedy, after all, but their choice, Andrea's and Carlo's. More than the beginning and the ending, Andrea had

had the middle of the tale. Minnie's hatred for Andrea's brother, even for Andrea's brother's wife, it was all quite clear to me, everything but the crescent gap in the canoe.

"Derrick," I asked at breakfast—Derrick, with renewed energy, was planning a second start for the rapids—"do you believe in premonitions?"

Derrick laughed.

"Derrick," I tried again, "suppose I told you I was afraid to do the rapids?"

"You afraid? Not really?" He scoffed openly.

"Well"—my eyes dropped before his—"Derrick, old dear," I whispered, "I'm sorry. But that funny old pain in my side has come back. I think you'll have to get me back to Doctor Haddock."

Derrick was a dear.

"Why didn't you tell me? Melly, darling—"

I murmured something about not being a "kill-joy."

"You're game to the end," he whispered against my hair. "But you're going to keep fit, Melly."

Doctor Haddock, at home, was my very good friend. I had won. I swallowed my disappointment about the trout fishing beyond the rapids, and I kept my own counsel when Derry promised we'd come back another summer.

I had a feeling that Minnie watched our departure from her klondike.

"He's amazingly like Carlo!" Derrick told me once, as Huya, poised at the steering wheel and looking oddly out of place as guider of this high-powered motor boat, turned and flashed us a shy smile. Derrick frankly had his arm about me. And, racing for the train and civilization, I was conscious of my own normal happiness and of Andrea's stranger happiness. "But you're merely life-size, you silly," I told myself. "Andrea was a good bit more than life-size. Hard for folks like Andrea to find elbowroom in a conventional old world!"



FROM A CITY WINDOW

THERE is such loneliness as deserts keep,
With purple-misted silence and the flare
Of dizzy colors in the heated air,
And loneliness of oceans, where the sweep
Of sudden wings or glint of sails goes deep
Into the consciousness because they dare
That vastness, too, and are companions there,
And that great loneliness of plains asleep.

But, oh, what loneliness there must be here
For one, near living Beauty on the street,
Who hears the rustle of her silken clothes;
Here knowing no one, by no one held dear—
As wistful as a beggar child might greet
Through iron pickets summer's loveliest rose!

GLENN WARD DRESBACH.



Austen's Arm

By Arthur Crabb

Author of "The Lady in Black,"
"Jimmy Evan's Comes Back," etc.

AUSTEN PARK was a little over thirty and many people said he was a snob. He was the son of George Weston Park, the middle name showing the union of the Weston and Park families; his mother had been Margaret Austen, and thus Austen Park had been born into one of the most exclusive and, in a social way, most prominent families of Alden. Austen considered that fact to be much more important than it was, which lent color to the belief that he was a snob.

He was graduated from Harvard covered with social and athletic honors. His father had died before his college days, his mother shortly after his graduation, leaving him an extremely large sum of money, which brought about his partnership in the brokerage firm of Dodge, Carson & Park.

Austen looked upon himself very seriously as a business man, and, because of his family connections, other bankers and brokers were forced to consider him and his partners seriously. But Austen's responsibilities required concentration only at short intervals, rather than long hours of work, and as a result he had ample time for travel and sports.

He was rather above average height and a splendid specimen of physical man. He was undoubtedly handsome which not-always-desirable attribute may or may not have been enhanced by his small, but carefully trained, black mustache.

He hunted and fished in foreign and domestic parts, he played a great deal of auction for high stakes, and was admitted highly proficient at the game; he rode well, he was an authority on

horses and a widely noticed figure at horse shows, but beyond any question his game was golf.

Even Hugh Ladd in his palmiest days had not been a better player than Austen Park. Austen had all the attributes of a champion; not even those who disliked him most had ever accused him of having an atom of yellow in him; his form was close to perfection, his skill remarkable; on the links he was calm, resourceful, and courageous, and he had that most necessary qualification for a great player, an intense desire to win.

His skill and his successes brought him laudatory publicity, which was sweet indeed to him. His friends knew, and he knew himself, his ability as a golfer was dearer to him than anything else in the world, except, perhaps, such things as his health, his social position, and his reputation for honorable dealing, which he took for granted and therefore left out of consideration.

Austen was undoubtedly a snob. Certainly he was conceited beyond words, and he was as selfish as a man can well be. He was thoroughly disliked by the rank and file of golfers at the Lanning Club, and it bothered him not at all. So much of their dislike as he noticed, he put down to jealousy.

In a word, Austen Park was spoiled, and it would perhaps have been surprising if it were not so, considering his birth, his upbringing, his wealth, and his unquestionable ability and skill in many lines.

At noon on a Saturday in the early spring it happened that the Green Com-

mittee of the Lanning Golf Club, which is in Stockton, near the city of Alden, gathered at the same table for luncheon. Sargent Winthrop, the chairman, said suddenly:

"Say, look here. Austen Park said to me this morning he wanted to have a talk with the committee."

"What's he want to talk about?"

Paul Waters asked.

"I don't know what it is, except he said it was important. I s'pose he's got some kick, like everybody else."

"Tell him to write it," Paul suggested.

"I asked him why he didn't write it, and he said it wasn't the sort of thing he could write." Winthrop was plainly annoyed. Complaints and suggestions, usually with little, if any, merit, were too numerous to be anything except annoyances.

"Why not let him say what he's got to say now and have it over with?" Hugh Ladd suggested.

Winthrop went across the room to Austen and returned with him. Conventional greetings were exchanged.

"I want to talk with you about something which happened here Thursday afternoon," Austen said. "It's rather a long story."

"All right, let's have it," Hugh Ladd said.

His story was long. Austen and three other men, two of them guests, had played at the club on Thursday afternoon, and four men—Lewis, Range, Johnson, and Riggs—had behaved in an outrageous manner on the course, which outrage consisted largely in showing no consideration whatever for Austen and his friends, who were behind them—they had broken the rules of golf, the etiquette of the game, and the Green Committee's own regulations. They had, in fact, acted like a lot of ignorant, selfish boors. Furthermore, such was their well-known habit. Austen did not use words as strong as

these, but he conveyed the idea emphatically.

"Now, I want to put it up to you gentlemen fairly and ask you a question," Austen went on. "There are certain definite rules, they are posted all over the place, and, as I see it, those rules are made to be obeyed, and it is the committee's duty to enforce them."

"Why didn't you go through?" Paul Waters asked, as though it would have been a simple thing to do.

"How in Heaven's name could we go through?" Austen exclaimed. "You can't force your way through, you can't take pot shots at human beings. The game hasn't degenerated into a riot, even here."

"Now you know what those fellows are," Winthrop said. "What are you going to do about it?"

"That's exactly what I want to know," Austen said. "What are you going to do about it? I have no doubt they are all estimable gentlemen; they are probably very good to their families; but that is not the point. It's bad enough for certain members to treat the other members that way, but it seems to me a guest at a club is entitled to the same courtesy as in your home. If you take a man to your house, it is reasonable to presume your wife won't throw a lamp at him; possibly, if she throws it at you, you may overlook it, though I doubt it."

Sargent Winthrop lost a mite of his everlasting good humor. "It's easy enough to talk that way," he said. "We know all about it, just as you do; we've all been up against it, and we just have to put up with it and grin. They're all fine, old fellows, only they just don't understand; they get excited or forget themselves and behave that way."

"We've done all we can without starting a fight," Hugh Ladd said. "Would you suggest they be suspended or asked to resign from the club?"

"I suggest nothing," Austen said. "I

don't see that it is my province to tell the committee how to enforce its own rules. I said I had a question to ask you. It's this: There was something over two thousand dollars up on the game. My guests and, accordingly, the guests of the club, lost the match because of the absolutely unpardonable behavior of members of the club. I can't take the money. I might——"

"It was as fair for one as the other," Waters said.

Austen ignored the remark. "I might as well ask a man to my house to play auction and use marked cards. I don't know what to do about the money. I don't see that I can take it. The whole thing is most embarrassing. Isn't it reasonable to ask that the committee either enforce the rules or say frankly that they are dead letters?"

"That's putting it pretty strong, Park," Hugh Ladd said. "This is, first of all, a family club, it's a community institution, a sort of village playground. We've all discouraged gambling except for such small stakes that winning or losing makes no difference to anybody. Personally, if any one wishes to play for real money, I wish he'd do it somewhere else, and I think that's the general sentiment of the club. As a general proposition, we get along pretty well; there are sore spots, there's no use denying that—Lewis and Riggs and their crowd is one of them—but, as Winthrop says, they are fine old fellows, except for that one unfortunate idiosyncrasy. It's wrong, there's no doubt about it; but golf's a game, a recreation, and we try not to take it too seriously, though there's a strong tendency the other way. The committee unquestionably has the right and power to enforce the rules, but it's a grave question whether it would not do much more real harm to enforce them sometimes than not to do so. If you insist on pressing the matter, I presume we shall have to take some action."

Austen smiled. "I have stated the case," he said. "I don't see that I can do any more. I'm very much obliged to you all for listening to me."

When Austen was gone Winthrop cursed. "He's perfectly right, but what can you do about it? That's the hell of it."

The committee didn't know what to do about it, and dispersed to play golf and perhaps to think it over individually.

Austen Park, at six o'clock that afternoon, left the club and drove westward, alone. Just outside of Stockton there is a mile of smooth road which runs mostly through woods. It has no crossings, and Austen drove his big roadster along it very fast that evening. But a little dirt lane comes into it which no one ever thinks of; Austen did not even know it was there, and he was watching the road ahead when, suddenly, out of the lane and directly before him there shot a little car. There was no time to plan, no man's mind could act quickly enough to analyze the situation. Austen's action was instinctive and did not lack courage. He turned to the left, straight for a low bank and a mass of trees and bushes. There was a crash of glass, a tearing of metal, and, beneath it all, a dull thud. Austen's car plowed into the bank and stopped. The other car was overturned in the gutter on the right. A woman lay on the edge of the road.

She was unconscious. There was a big bruise above her temple and her sailor hat was crushed against her head. Austen looked about him, not knowing what to do; then he looked up and down the road for a car coming, and saw none. He ran to his own car and started the engine. He went into reverse, the car responded and backed into the road. The front mud guard on the left was smashed down against the tire; he tried to pull it upward and

away from the wheel, but an excruciating pain shot through his right arm. He looked at it and saw a deep cut in his wrist bleeding profusely. He got on his knees and put his shoulder against the mud guard and forced it upward, clear of the tire. He turned the car, working the gear shift and steering with his left hand. He got his arm under and around the girl and, by exerting all his strength, threw her over his shoulder and so carried her to his car. Then, with his right arm supporting her and the blood from his wrist flowing over her dress, he drove to the Hopedale Hospital.

On the way the girl murmured something he did not understand. She tried to move, uttered an exclamation, and sank back against him.

Austen staggered into the hospital, spoke to a nurse, pointed to the door, and collapsed. A half hour later he was very weak, but otherwise himself again, with nothing more than a bad cut on his arm and bloody clothes to show for his accident. The girl had not gotten off so lightly. They told him she was in the operating room, her leg was broken surely, and there was the possibility of a fractured skull and internal injuries. They asked him who she was, and Austen said he hadn't the faintest idea. All he knew about her was that she drove a car without looking where she was going.

The young woman's identity was established quickly. She turned out to be Helen, the daughter of George Riggs, he of the four-ball match which had sent Austen to the Green Committee. Austen rather expected trouble with Mr. Riggs. He had, when the accident occurred, been going at considerably more than the twenty-five miles an hour the law allowed, and it was quite unlikely such a man as Riggs would be willing to admit the accident in any degree was his daughter's fault.

Austen saw Mr. Riggs the next morning and was very much surprised when Mr. Riggs refused to discuss that phase of the matter. His concern was entirely for his daughter's condition.

"Apparently a broken leg is the worst of it, let's be thankful for that," he said. "How are you?"

Austen said, truthfully, he was right as could be, his arm would heal quickly, and there was nothing else wrong.

At the end of a week, Austen's arm was not of much use to him; Helen Riggs' broken leg was her only injury. Austen sent flowers to her as a matter of routine; he made proper inquiries as to her progress, and indicated his desire to Mr. Riggs to make good the damage to her car. Mr. Riggs would not hear of it. His daughter was largely, if not entirely, to blame for the accident.

At the end of two weeks Austen's arm seemed entirely well, certainly it was all right for ordinary purposes, but when he tried it out by hitting a few golf balls, he found he wasn't quite up to that.

During the next week he was told he might see Miss Riggs. He had asked for the privilege, as he thought it would be the decent thing to express his regrets personally. He found her on a couch.

"Oh, Mr. Park," she cried, "I'm terribly sorry. It was all my fault. I thought I could see the road from the lane, both ways, but I couldn't, and I went right on without slowing down at all. Will you ever forgive me?" There could be no question of her sincerity.

"If I hadn't been driving so fast, it wouldn't have happened at all. You're the sufferer and I'm the one to be forgiven." Austen had expected the Riggs family to be rather annoying and to put as much of the blame on him as they could.

"No, no." She shook her head.

"And they tell me that you picked me up and put me in the car and took me to the hospital. I don't remember anything about it, but they say it must have hurt you a great deal, and you fainted when you got me there. It was all so wonderful of you that I—I—I really don't know what to say."

Austen was rather annoyed. What did the girl expect him to do, go off and leave her lying on the road? The easiest way out was to laugh, and Austen laughed.

"Everything considered, I guess we were both pretty lucky," he said. "Does it hurt? Have you any pain now?"

"Not any more; it did hurt at first. But you *were* good to me, weren't you?" She insisted on making him acknowledge that. He asked her the question he had asked himself.

"You'd hardly expect me to go off and leave you there in the road, would you?" he said, smiling.

The girl made a little face, as though she did not like his putting the matter in that light. "Does your arm keep you from playing golf?" she asked.

"It has so far. I suppose it isn't quite strong yet. I imagine another week will make it all right."

"You're a very wonderful player, aren't you?"

When a fact is stated, as that was, in cold blood to a man's face, there is not much to do but accept it as gracefully as possible.

"Sometimes I play fairly well," Austen said. "I like playing well almost better than anything in the world. Do you play?"

"I try to. I love it; but I'm awful. I just go hacking along, getting in everybody's way. I try to play only in the morning, when nobody else is on the course. When I play in the afternoon with other girls, we spend most of our time letting other people go through. The best score I ever made was a hundred and ten."

"Have you ever taken lessons?"

"I did once, but it didn't do any good. I'll never play any better."

"Perhaps you'll let me try to help you some time."

"I'd love to; it would be awfully nice if you would." Her reply was purely conventional.

They talked for perhaps a half hour before Austen took his departure. As he disappeared around the corner, Miss Riggs made a face at him, most of it being contrived by sticking out her tongue. Very charming young ladies sometimes do that, when they are alone.

The next day Austen took a dozen balls and went out on the course to practice a little. His arm felt perfectly well, but he could not control his shots at all. He tried every trick he knew, but the balls acted as though they were made of wood; he could get no distance, there was no snap to his play, almost every attempt resulted in a low, weak slice; he had no more skill than the veriest duffer.

He tried it again the next day, with no better results, and went to see his doctor. The doctor examined his arm and wrist and insisted they were in perfect condition. He admitted the muscles might still be a little weak, but otherwise the condition was exactly as it had been before the accident. The cut had not been serious in the least.

Austen was worried; he knew many a man had lost his golf skill through an accident and he wondered whether it could happen to him. In his eyes such a thing would be a calamity.

Somewhere in the back of his head was another thing which worried him. He tried to convince himself it was nonsense and of no importance whatever, but, try as he would, he could not drive it from his thoughts.

Mr. Riggs and his family had been very white about the accident; they had not said one unpleasant word, there had

not been a trace of offense or blame in their voices or manner; but that was only so far as the accident was concerned. He had held no conversation with any of them, except Helen, about anything except the accident. What troubled him was Helen's attitude toward him. She had said the right thing, had been more than decent about what he had done, but when that subject was closed her attitude had changed, subtly, to be sure, but Austen was certain the girl was, for some reason or other, antagonistic.

He was surprised he gave it a thought, but try as he would, he could not drive the annoying idea from his head. Furthermore, he liked her, which surprised him still more. During the half hour he had spent with her she had made a most unusual and favorable impression on him. He admitted the fact and tried to find the reason for it. She was good to look at, a bright, dignified, gentle young woman, but he had known similar girls before. She was not the sort with whom Austen was wont to travel, and yet, somewhere, there was a fascination about her which would not down.

He wanted to see her again and did not know how to go about it. It had been simple enough the first time, there had been a good reason for going then, it had been a duty. Now there was no good reason for going. Nevertheless, Austen made up his mind to go, changed his mind, changed it back again, and finally went, feeling like a fool and knowing it was absurd for a man like him to call on a girl like her.

She seemed to look upon it the same way. Miss Riggs was entirely able to meet any situation which arose and met this one, and Austen, after an hour's call, departed well aware that Miss Riggs did not like him, that she had been cool to him, and that she had no desire whatever to see him again. The knowledge rankled, and a great

big "Why?" arose before Austen. Perhaps, then, only his sporting instinct was aroused; a difficult girl, if she be at all attractive, always has a lure about her. He called on Helen three or four times and was met with complete courtesy by her and the members of her family, but it was impossible for them to hide the fact he was not quite welcome.

He struggled on with his golf, and it seemed to him the more he struggled the worse he got. He tried out his arm in other ways and found it perfectly well, the doctors said there was absolutely nothing wrong, and Austen wondered whether the shock of the accident had upset the coördination between brain and limb which is the basis of athletic skill. Multitudes of men who were quite as intelligent and quite as good athletes as he could not play golf to save their souls. Wherein did the knack lie? Austen's whole world was topsy-turvy.

One day, returning to the clubhouse from an hour's futile practice, Austen met Sargent Winthrop, the chairman of the Green Committee.

"Have you had any trouble with Lewis and Riggs lately?" Winthrop asked.

"No, I haven't," Austen said.

"Well, we had a talk with them," Winthrop said, "and we hurt their feelings, that's all it did; it just hurt their feelings. They said they didn't know they'd been doing anything wrong; they played right ahead just as fast as they could. They said they knew they didn't play well, and they supposed they didn't get along as fast as some of the others, but they'd always hurried and tried to get out of the way. They said, of course, they didn't want to annoy anybody and they'd be particularly careful in the future, and there you are. I don't see but that's about all the committee or anybody else can do. You've got to have a little patience

with old fellows o' that kind. How's your arm; they tell me it's bothering you a lot?"

"Something's bothering me," Austen said. "I can't play a shot, but I'm not sure it's my arm."

"Must be that," Winthrop insisted; "couldn't be anything else. Come round all right before long and you'll be as good as ever."

Austen blushed when he was alone and thought of what Sargent had said. Not once had Mr. Riggs said a word to him of the incident, nor had his manner indicated he had taken any offense at Austen's formal criticism to the committee.

Austen became almost morbid. He haunted the golf course, playing in out-of-the-way corners. He felt humiliated and ashamed; his most cherished possession had been taken from him and his pride had been sorely hurt by a young girl. His lost skill and the girl together became an obsession, and all the while he felt as if he were dreaming. It was impossible that such things could happen to him.

One afternoon as he reached the club he saw Helen Riggs practicing driving and stopped near her. He watched her for a moment and then said:

"I thought you said you couldn't play golf."

"I can't," she answered, "but I'm lots better than I used to be."

Austen left his car and went and stood beside her.

"Play some shots for me," he suggested.

She smiled, changed her club, and drove two or three balls with a mid-iron.

"Good heavens!" Austen exclaimed. "You not play golf? You've got the making of a champion in you."

She was pleased in spite of herself. "You know," she said, "it's a most remarkable thing. As soon as I was well,

I suddenly had a feeling I could play; I don't know what it was, it seemed to be a sort of confidence. I used to be frightened to death of a trap in front of a green, and I just lay down and died at a water hazard, and now—well, somehow, they don't worry me at all, and I've stopped topping and the balls go miles farther than they used to."

"Are you playing with any one this afternoon?"

"I was going to play with Georgianna Lewis, but she telephoned she couldn't come."

"Will you play with me?"

"Oh, I couldn't, you're so much better than I am."

"It wouldn't make any difference if I were, but as a matter of fact I'm the poorest player in the club."

She looked at him blankly for a moment, and then her face clouded over. "Oh, I'm so sorry. I forgot, I knew your arm had never gotten well. Please forgive me."

"There's nothing wrong with my arm; it's in perfect condition."

"Then *what* is the matter?"

"I haven't the faintest idea; I wish I had. Will you play with me?"

"Why, yes, of course, if you really want me to."

They played together, and Austen made an approximated ninety-six, which was twenty strokes worse than he had once considered a rather ordinary round. But even so he was two up on Miss Riggs. The Lanning course is no child's play for women; it takes a very good woman player to score under a hundred, and Miss Riggs made exactly a hundred.

Austen watched her closely as she played and made suggestions to her. Once when she was in a sand trap, she went at the shot wrong and he started to show her the correct way to play it. He dropped a ball in the sand, hesitated, and smiled.

"I can't do it myself," he said, and

then, still smiling, "but I know how it ought to be done." And, ignoring his ball, he showed her how to make the shot. She tried it once or twice and got the idea. Austen shook his head.

"Queer, isn't it? I can make the stroke correctly easily enough when the ball isn't there. When I try to play the ball, only Heaven knows what's going to happen."

"It's the most remarkable thing I ever heard of," she said; "but it will come back to you; it's sure to."

"I wish I were sure it would," Austen said.

When they had finished he said to her, "It's been the pleasantest afternoon I've had since the smash-up." And then suddenly he said, smiling, "I wonder how much difference it really makes, whether one plays well or badly?"

"I'm crazy to play really well!" she exclaimed.

"Keep at it and you will," he said.

He had tea with her, and afterward he watched her as she walked away. She was good to look at; she was very pleasant; she was the finest girl he had ever known.

Before the end of July he played a dozen rounds with Miss Riggs. Her improvement was very remarkable; she had all the signs of a great player, from her graceful, powerful swing on the tee to her calm confidence on the putting green. Late in July she made a ninety-two and beat Austen. He gave her advice, which she followed; she grasped ideas quickly, she was a most intelligent pupil. His showing her how to do things he could not do himself was pathetic.

Gradually, as he played with her, his golf became less than insignificant—the girl herself was all that mattered. He loved her, and to win her was the only thing in the world worth while. Finally Austen proposed, and she showed nei-

ther surprise, pleasure, nor displeasure. She was quite matter-of-fact about it; she had perhaps expected him to propose and was prepared.

"I don't love you, and that's all there is to it," she said. "I'm not quite sure I like you very much; when you came to see me after I was hurt, I hated you."

"How could you hate me then?"

"I've heard things about you; of course, every one knows about the great Austen Park," she said. Then she added: "But it's never safe to believe things you hear about other people. I think it was mostly because of what you'd said about father."

"What I said about your father?"

"Didn't you say horrid things about him to Mr. Ladd and Paul Waters and Mr. Winthrop and goodness knows how many other people?"

"I see. I wonder how you heard of that."

"You know perfectly well, or you ought to, that if anything happens or anybody says anything in Stockton, it's all over the place the same day. Father heard all about it, and he's the dearest father anybody ever had, and naturally I don't like people who say unkind things about him. Mrs. Winthrop is father's first cousin."

"I didn't know that," Austen said, "but it wouldn't have made any difference, then, if I had known it."

"And Mrs. Paul Waters is almost my very best friend. - She came to see me every day while I was in the hospital. Perhaps you can understand why I wasn't crazy about you."

"Yes, I understand easily enough. Hasn't what's happened since made any difference?"

"Of course, I don't hate you any more."

"But you won't marry me?"

There followed an able and forceful explanation as to why such a thing would be most inadvisable and, finally, impossible. Austen was quite unable

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to convince Miss Riggs her premises were incorrect to begin with and her logic faulty to end with.

Before they parted there came one light, merry, teasing word from her.

"Besides all the other reasons," she said, "I could never marry a man with a little, black mustache, especially when he was so fond of it himself. I'd be terribly jealous."

For some mysterious reason Austen found a tiny bit of encouragement in that. The lady deigned to joke in a serious moment.

The next morning the little, black mustache was gone, and Austen laughed in spite of himself. Once upon a time he had been very fond of that mustache.

When Miss Riggs saw him again she laughed, too.

"How times have changed since knighthood was in flower," she said.

She was making a fool of him, he knew, but there was nothing for Austen to do but grin and bear it. He was a fool, he always had been a fool; she was making him understand all about it, driving it home, and she was doing it not with malice aforethought, but simply by being her own sweet self. He loved her, and it was very evident she did not love him. Though a man in love is not always correct in diagnosing a lady's sentiments, in this case Austen happened to be correct. But he was no quitter.

"You're going away very soon, aren't you?" he asked.

"Yes, on Thursday, to Rose Hill, for August."

"I'm going to Rose Hill, too, for August. Do you mind?"

Miss Riggs raised her eyebrows slightly. "If you're going, what good would it do for me to object? It's a little bald, it seems to me."

"I've got to keep on trying—trying to make you love me," he said, "and I don't believe absence makes the

heart grow fonder, anyway, not when one heart isn't fond to begin with."

"Do as you like, of course," she said; "but I warn you, honestly, if you make a nuisance of yourself, I won't see you at all." There could be no shadow of a doubt of her sincerity.

The Riggs family went to Rose Hill and Austen followed, and for a month he was humble and obedient. Rose Hill was the last place on earth which, under ordinary conditions, he would have chosen for a month's holiday; it was a quiet, unpretentious, sleepy village on Narragansett Bay. He seldom saw Helen Riggs alone; she played about with a half dozen young men and women, and Austen had to be satisfied with such crumbs of consideration as fell from her hand, feeling like a rank outsider and very unhappy and ashamed. The humiliation was very great, the greater because he knew that he deserved it. His conceit was a thing of the past.

He played golf over a tiny course with her and her father. Mr. Riggs never varied his innate courtesy; neither did he ever say a word of what was past, nor did he appear to notice Austen's very marked pursuit of his daughter. He was a simple, kindly gentleman.

In September the Riggses and Austen returned to Stockton, and Austen, try as he would, could discover nothing in Miss Riggs' attitude toward him which, by any stretch of the imagination, could give him cause to hope. He was a most unhappy man.

His golf had not improved in the least; he was buried deep in the ruck of golfdom, and, he believed, was doomed to stay there. He didn't care; that was the least of his troubles; his money, his health, and his family seemed trivial things, too. His whole hope for happiness lay in one young woman of whom, six months before, he had never heard, and she showed

not the slightest intention of making him happy.

In the meantime Miss Riggs was seeing the miracle through. She had become a golfer of remarkable skill, almost equal to the best in the land.

She continued to tolerate Austen, and that was all.

One day in October Miss Riggs asked Austen to play golf with her and her father and Mr. Lewis. She seldom asked Austen to do anything; when she did he tried to convince himself it was a good sign, but it was scant encouragement.

They started early, the course was clear, and they came to the ninth hole. The green lay below them some hundred and seventy yards away. There was a pond before it, a brook to the right of it, sand traps to the left of it, and trouble beyond it.

"I have a three for a forty-three," she said. "That's better than I have ever done." Not only was that so, but for a woman to make a forty-three on the outward journey at Lanning is almost unheard of.

Of the four, only Miss Riggs reached the green. Mr. Lewis' ball dropped into the pond, Mr. Riggs' ball disappeared in the long grass to the left of the traps, and Austen played a low slice into the woods across the brook on the right.

Mr. Lewis and his caddy fished for his ball in the pond with a long pole; Mr. Riggs and his caddy searched in the long grass; Austen found his ball lying very badly and played it into the brook. He lifted it, dropped it, and played to the green in four. Then he looked about him. Mr. Lewis had recovered his ball from the water, had played it into the pond again, and was fishing for it again. Mr. Riggs was still searching in the long grass.

"Fore!" The voice that spoke that word was low; it came onward softly on the wings of the gentle breeze.

Austen looked toward the ninth tee. Hugh Ladd, Jimmy Norris, Paul Waters, and David White were there, waiting.

"Oughtn't we to let them go through?" Helen Riggs said to Austen. "Let 'em wait," he said. "We've got troubles of our own."

And then Austen's face turned a fiery red, and he looked at Helen Riggs. She was smiling and blushing and her eyes were sparkling.

A few short months before, Austen had gone before the Green Committee and lodged a formal complaint against Mr. Riggs and Mr. Lewis and two others because they had made him and his friends wait, because they had broken the rules and etiquette of golf; they had kept Austen waiting while they searched for balls, the crime of crimes on the golf course, excepting only cheating. And now Austen had said, "Let 'em wait," and said it involuntarily, straight from his heart, and when he realized what he had said, he was covered with confusion. The last vestige of the old Austen disappeared in that instant; he had fallen from the high pinnacle on which he had set himself, and he had fallen to the final depths. And in that instant Helen Riggs had her revenge, and it affected her most curiously.

"Oh, Austen," she murmured. There was a note in her voice he had never heard before, a note which sent a thrill through him. He turned and waved to the four men on the tee to come through. Then he turned back to Helen; she was looking straight at him, their eyes met, and she blushed. She lowered her eyes and walked to the back of the green and sat down. Intently she watched the four men drive from the ninth tee, watched the four balls, beautifully played, come sailing through the air and drop on the green.

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greeting, putted quickly close to the hole. Paul Waters knocked the balls away, conceding the short putts; they said words of thanks, and were gone. It seemed as though they had hardly hesitated in their onward progress.

Austen walked beside Helen up the hill through the woods to the tenth tee. His heart was singing pæans of joy; something, some miracle, had happened. The girl was gazing straight ahead of her and did not speak. She teed her ball, drove, and topped into the brook below; the others drove, and Austen feed his ball. He didn't care whether he hit it or not; he didn't care about anything except the wonderful, mysterious thing which had happened, the note in Helen's voice, the expression in Helen's eyes.

Austen did not bother with his stance, he took no preliminary swing or waggle; he just stepped up and drove. The ball started low, sped on, rose slowly, flew straight between the traps, flew on and on almost to the road, nearly three hundred yards away. He gazed at it in amazement.

"Great guns," he muttered.

"Oh, Austen." The girl gasped the words in amazement, and went down the hill staring straight ahead. She played, missed, played again, missed again, and picked up, and followed her father through the rough. Austen played a mashie over the road and traps close to the pin. It was so on the eleventh and twelfth holes. Austen's ball seemed to have magic in it, good magic. Helen dubbed and dubbed blindly.

"What's the matter," he asked, "is anything wrong?"

"I don't know—nothing. I don't care—there's nothing wrong."

But there was something wrong; she did not make another good shot that afternoon. Austen played as though inspired; he holed a long putt for a three on the last green.

"Good Lord!" he exclaimed.

"Thirty-three for the nine holes. Great Cæsar's ghost!" And then he said, "It would have seemed interesting and important once upon a time."

Helen Riggs turned and went to the clubhouse.

In the locker room Mr. Riggs invited Austen home to dinner with them.

"I'd be delighted," Austen said.

On the clubhouse steps Mr. Riggs said, "Mr. Park is coming home to dinner with us."

Perhaps Mr. Riggs had noticed nothing unusual that afternoon except Austen's remarkable play on the last nine holes. Helen said nothing.

"Will you drive home with me?" Austen asked her.

Still she said nothing, but stepped into his car. He drove to Stockton and turned into the road which runs westward, through the woods, and has no crossroads, but only a lane which runs into it, a little-used lane which is the back way to a farm. That road was not the way to the Riggs' house, but led away from it. Helen did not ask why he was going that way. He turned into the lane and stopped close to where the accident had happened.

"Helen."

She did not move or speak. He took her hand in his, and his touch startled her. She opened the door and jumped to the ground; he followed her, and she faced him. She seemed to be very frightened.

"Helen, Helen."

Perhaps Austen was courageous, perhaps his act required no courage. She did not resist.

"Oh, Austen," she murmured.

Later on they stood close by the spot where Helen had lain in the road, unconscious.

"I wonder what really happened here last spring," Austen said. "It

wasn't just an ordinary smashup, that's sure."

"I've been wondering, too," Helen said. "Your arm and my break were the least of it. Do you realize the shock drove every bit of golf out of you?"

"And you absorbed it."

"It does seem so, doesn't it; but yours came back to you this afternoon the minute you saw those men on the tee and said, 'Let them wait; we've got troubles of our own.'"

"Whatever it was, it wasn't that."

"If it wasn't that, what was it?" she asked, laughing.

"The way you said, 'Oh, Austen,' and the way you looked at me."

"Nonsense! Do you realize that I couldn't play at all after that?"

"You were in love," he said.

"So were you," she said, making a face at him.

"Love affects people differently, that's all. Why did you suddenly love me when I said, 'Let them wait'?"

"Don't be silly. It wasn't that."

"Then what was it?"

"I don't know what it was. I've been wondering about things—never mind how long, and I—I—well, I decided this afternoon—"

"At just that moment; you can't deny it."

"I knew, at just that moment, you'd

joined the common people, you know you were just an ordinary mortal, like the rest of us. I'd never been sure, absolutely sure, of you before."

"I've learned my lesson," he said. "I learned it long ago. I began learning here, when you and I met."

On the way home Helen said, "Do you suppose you'll go on playing just as you did before the accident, and I'll never play well again?"

"I don't know, I don't care—not about myself, anyway."

She looked up at him, smiling. "It does seem very unimportant, doesn't it?"

The next day Austen met Sargent Winthrop.

"Well, I see you're getting pretty friendly with George Riggs," he said. "He's not such a bad fellow, when you get to know him, is he?"

"No, he's not," Austen said. "He's promised to be my father-in-law."

"Well, well, well, isn't that nice!" Winthrop exclaimed. "I congratulate you; I do, indeed! Helen's a fine girl, a very fine girl. You're a lucky man." Then Winthrop chuckled. "And—and—and I guess that makes one trouble less for the Green Committee."

And Sargent Winthrop chuckled again.



POETS IN THE MARKET PLACE

WE sell and buy the morning,
Barter and trade the noon;
We give our breath to the dealer Death
For the silver coin of the moon.

For the coin of the moon, and the sun's red gold
Are our mind and spirit and body sold.

MARY CAROLYN DAVIES.



More Super-Women

By Anice Terhune

Madame de Maintenon:

"The Prison-born Enchantress"

Nay, never ask this week, fair lord,
Where they are gone, nor yet this year,
Except with this for an overword—
But where are the snows of yesteryear?
—*Ballad of Dead Ladies.*

SHE was born in a prison—and ended her days as wife of the King of France.

She used to fold her slim fingers complacently across her lace-draped breast and say:

"The hand of God brought me to this height."

Her enemies put it differently. They laid her stupendous rise to "mysterious depths of iniquity."

I will tell you her story, and you may judge for yourself whether it was she or her enemies who came nearer the truth of the matter. In either case, the fact remains that she emerged from the very grimmest surroundings to shine at the glittering court of Louis XIV. and to rule that same court when it was in the zenith of its splendor.

Her father, Constant d'Aubigné, had been thrust into Château Trompette, the prison at Niort, for double murder: he had killed his wife and her lover.

He found Château Trompette life very dull. So, before long, he began making love to the pretty daughter of the governor of the prison. They were secretly married. In due time—on November 27, 1635, to be exact—the future super-woman, little Françoise,

opened her soft, smiling eyes on the hard gray walls around her.

She was not especially welcome. Her parents were almost starving. Her nursery was the cold stone floor of the cell wherein lay her feeble, complaining father, now more or less of an invalid.

As a tiny child, Françoise romped and played with the jailer's little daughter, who sometimes taunted her with her poverty. Even then the girl must have felt the faint flutterings of her future greatness, for she used to say haughtily to her playmate:

"I know I'm poor, but I'm a lady, anyway—and you're *not*!"

Françoise's mother worked and schemed unceasingly to have her husband set free, and, at last, the longed-for pardon came. The little family gathered its "shabby genteel" rags about its shoulders, and shiveringly set sail for Martinique, to begin life anew.

On the way over, Françoise was terribly ill—so close to death that the watchers around her thought her actually dead. Her father, annoyed at his wife's grief, wanted to throw the child overboard without more ado. But for one small happening he would have done this, and, by his selfish act, would have destroyed a super-woman whose destiny was to rule France.

Fate threw the dice otherwise. Just as the father's hand was raised to hurl

the little girl into the water, his wife begged for one moment in which to kiss her dead child farewell. As she held the little body closely to her, the mother suddenly shrieked:

"Her heart is beating! She's alive!"

So, after all, Françoise went to Martinique instead of to the bottom of the ocean.

D'Aubigné could not get on even in the new country of promise. What little money he made he lost at cards. Finally he died. His wife then set sail for France, leaving a trail of debts behind her. Incidentally she also left poor little Françoise as excess luggage.

But again fate was with the child. Kind friends made up a purse and sent her back to France, hard upon her mother's heels.

Madame d'Aubigné managed to scratch along somehow by doing needlework. But she could not feed more than one mouth. So Françoise was sent from pillar to post; first to her aunt, Madame de Villette, then to her godmother, Madame de Neuillant. Here her position was almost that of a menial. She groomed the horses and took care of the turkeys. Madame de Neuillant, jealous of the attention the girl's good looks and charming manners attracted, treated her with scant kindness.

Before she was fifteen Françoise's beauty began to attract notice. A peasant boy, watching her engineer her flock of turkeys through the courtyard, fell head over heels in love with her. There was a pastoral courtship. Madame de Neuillant got wind of it, and swore to pack Françoise off to a convent.

But the peasant boy was not Françoise's only admirer. Among the others there was a rich youth, Fadio Lamorimère. He became desperately in love with the girl, and when she would have none of him he bribed the concierge to let him occupy a room at the top

of the house, next to Françoise's little room. The rest of the family knew nothing at all about it.

Finally Françoise, lonely and neglected, was induced to return his love. For a time the intrigue flourished at the top of the house, gayly and as secretly as the edelweiss blooms in the Alpine heights. Then fate again stepped in, in the shape of another adorer, Chevalier de Mère. This new suitor avalanched fervid attentions on Françoise and used to call the poor child his "Young Indian" on account of her misfit clothes and her generally uncivilized appearance.

De Mère brought his friend, Paul Scarron, to see the beautiful, penniless, and forlorn little super-woman. Scarron, a famous coffeehouse wit and comic writer, was old enough to be her father. He was so crippled with paralysis and rheumatism as to be "more like the letter Z than a man."

When Françoise was pushed into the room to be inspected by this strange celebrity, she burst into tears of humiliation because her dress was so much too short for her long legs. Scarron was deeply touched at her mortification. Also, she looked very lovely when she cried, which cannot be said of every woman.

The crooked old poet lost his heart at once, and proposed marriage. To Françoise anything was better than grooming horses, or than burying herself in a convent, her only other alternative. So she accepted his proposal.

She was sixteen when the strange, crooked old bridegroom took her to his home. His sense of humor saw the situation in its true light.

"Marrying that beautiful young girl was the greatest poetic license I ever took in all my life," he remarked after the ceremony.

Françoise proved herself a perfect wife, from Scarron's point of view. Though they were married in name

only, she nursed him untiringly, listened to his latest and most indecent poems, copied his rough manuscript until she nearly fainted from weariness. She was a jolly comrade, and her great adaptability made him, more often than not, forget the difference in their ages.

Scarron could not entertain lavishly, for he had no money; but his house was always thronged with clever, interesting people. Françoise saw to it that their guests had a good time. Indeed, she told such amusing stories and was so fascinating that her dinner parties were always tremendous successes. Even though there was seldom so much as a scrap of meat on the table, François invariably sparkled through the whole meal, and at the end, when she marshaled her guests back to the meager drawing-room, they felt as if they had dined royally!

The little house in the Rue Severin was full to the brim of gaiety and good company, of sickness and poverty.

Françoise continued to attract the fashionable, as well as the intellectual, world. Her beauty was the magnet; her wit the spider's web which held her willing victims. She was tall, slender, and graceful, with soft dark eyes and fair hair. Her face tapered from a broad forehead to a pointed chin. Her complexion was brilliant, though how it could be so on the scant fare at the Scarron board it is hard to guess. Over and above all her other charms she was—as Madame de Sévigné put it—"delicious company."

Yet her position was a hard one. Her exuberant youth, clamoring for love, was chained to the chair of a withered old cripple.

One cold morning a man presented himself to Scarron and asked for a job as valet. His name, he said, was Alain Kerbrack, and he came from Brittany.

It was more than Françoise could do to lift her husband about the house

without help; a strong, healthy man was sorely needed in the little home, so Scarron engaged him.

And a very poor valet he was; about as much of a failure as a valet well could be. Still, Françoise seemed to like him, so the crippled old husband kept him on.

Then, a while later, one of Scarron's friends called on the poet, and remarked as he came in:

"A nice sort of valet you've got, Monsieur l'Abbé! I just met him on the street, dressed like a fine gentleman! It's time your eyes were opened! He's simply masquerading here on account of your wife's beautiful eyes. He's no more lackey than I am!"

Scarron took the blow like the game little man he was. Laughing loudly, he said:

"What you tell me is most diverting. I shall introduce it in my next play about deceived husbands." Then he changed the subject.

Before the valet returned home, Scarron had wrung the whole story from Françoise. The "valet" was her old lover Fadio, who, feeling unable to live without her, had taken the only way he could think of to be near her all the time. She "had begged him"—with more or less sincerity—"to keep away; but he had refused to listen, so what could she do?"

Apparently, she quite overlooked the fact that it would have been the simplest thing in the world to tell her husband at once, and so to have stopped the intrigue before it began.

However, Scarron lost no time in ending it. As soon as Fadio came in, the husband first turned on him all the poisonous darts of his vitriol wit, then sent him packing.

From this time on, having blazed the way, Françoise was mixed up in one intrigue after another. Scarron took the affairs rather as a joke on himself; but Françoise had so many adorers that

she feared even her indulgent husband might not stand for them all, so—says Maréchale de la Feoté—her friend, Ninon de l'Enclos, used to let her carry on these intrigues at her home. Ninon, you will remember, was an ageless super-woman on her own account.

Occasionally, when Scarron chose to open his bored eyes, he made things warm for his fascinating wife and her lovers. For instance, in the case of Charles de Beuvron. Charles had fallen victim to the charms of Madame Scarron—had fallen hard. He bombarded her with burning love letters, he threatened to blow his brains out when she flirted with other men, he took her to task for her kindness to her husband.

She entered into the affair with great enthusiasm. But one day she dropped a lurid note of De Beuvron's out of her pocket. Scarron saw it. With his crutch he raked it to his side. Picking it up, he read it. It told a great deal; in fact, it left nothing at all untold.

With a crooked smile, the Z-shaped man handed the note to Françoise.

"I wish you'd teach your lover how to spell," he sneered peevishly. "*Delices*"—delights—"is spelled with one l, not two, and *flamme*"—flame—"with two m's instead of one! Can't you educate him better?"

A moment later some callers came. Scarron proceeded to relate the contents of the letter to them with great ingeniousness, dilating on the bad spelling. Françoise deserved the humiliation she felt.

Scarron did not stop there. He told everybody he knew about the ill-spelled note, as a joke, of course. De Beuvron never heard the last of it. Ridicule smashed the intrigue most effectively. Which shows that Scarron, though elderly and dying, was no fool.

He was a long time dying. But at last he took his poor, brave, brilliant, crabbed soul out of this world. In his death, Françoise lost a protector and a

screen behind which to carry on her escapades. She was keen enough to realize this. So straightway she put on widow's weeds and amended her morals. A penniless widow at twenty-five, she steered a straight course.

Before long the court came forward with a small pension for "The Widow Scarron" which enabled her to live in modest comfort. She hated the grime of shabby gentility, and insisted on using wax candles instead of tallow, even if she had to go supperless to buy them. She dressed very plainly, but so daintily that her clothes always attracted attention.

She continued to appear in society. In fact, society became her one occupation. Her marvelous powers as a conversationalist and her nameless magnetism made her in demand everywhere. She always kept up with the newest ideas and with the latest literary fads. Her shrewdness told her when to drop them.

"I am one of the few women left in France who dares confess that there are limits to my own knowledge," she liked to boast. She never allowed herself to get out of temper, and never took offense at a fancied slight. She did not seemingly seek out any one; hence her friendship was regarded as a mark of distinction. Her stormy youth had taught her many a valuable lesson.

"She rose by her virtues instead of her vices," says Littell's "Living Age." "Virtue carried her farther than ever vice did."

She refused to allow her friendship to be monopolized by any one person.

"I could not love any one I did not respect," smugly says the much-changed Widow Scarron, "and I know so much evil about those around me that it is the rarest of pleasures to be able even to praise them! I never wish to be loved by any particular person. I wish to be thought well of by all."

With wondrous skill, she proceeded to walk a tight rope between self-effacement on the one side and self-assertion on the other.

Late in life she wrote regretfully:

"Honor was my folly, honor my idol, for which I am punished perhaps by excess of greatness. Would to God I had done as much for Him as I have for my reputation!"

By way of building up a name for goodness she did all sorts of kindly acts, such, for instance, as nursing a casual acquaintance through smallpox. On another occasion she left a party to rush off to the house of a friend to bandage a child's leg "because no one else could do it as well."

Finally she offered to help a young bride, Madame d'Heudicourt, to keep house. She got up at six o'clock, started the household going, gave the orders for the day, and set the servants to work with such tact and energy that Madame de Montespan, a patroness of the bride, became interested in her.

De Montespan's intrigue with King Louis XIV. was then in full flower; but it was still, supposedly, a secret. It was necessary for the couple's semi-royal and left-handed children to have some one as governess who would be discreet enough to keep not only her own mouth shut, but the mouths of others.

Madame Scarron seemed made for the part. When the proposition was put to her, she accepted with enthusiasm, only stipulating that the king himself should engage her. She even showed caution enough to let herself be bled, "so as not to blush at inconvenient questions."

The children adored her. Everybody was pleased, except the king. Her black clothes and her goody-goody precepts—on which Madame de Montespan dwelled with jealous anxiety—annoyed him. To put it mildly, he hated the sight of Françoise, at first. He hated

to hear every one singing her praises, as every one did, continually.

"To the devil with the Widow Scarron!" he burst out one day. "When shall I ever hear the last of her?"

Yet, in spite of his prejudices, she soon began to attract him. He ceased to regard her as a kill-joy and a literary prude. To his surprise, he found himself loving to talk with her.

When the Montespan children were legitimized in 1673, and thenceforward appeared at court, he gave Madame Scarron the small estate of Maintenon. Quickly she shook off the odious title of "The Widow Scarron," and became Madame de Maintenon. This was the first outward sign of royal favor.

Madame de Montespan, frightened and jealous of Françoise's growing popularity with the king, filled his ears full of lying tales of the governess' "dreadful temper."

Louis was touched by Madame de Maintenon's devotion to his children, especially to the eldest, the little Duke of Maine, whom he loved far better than the dauphin. So he paid no attention to the complaints.

In the summer of 1675 Françoise took Maine to the Pyrenees for his health. She and the king, of necessity, began to correspond—about Maine.

Louis found her letters entralling. He also discovered that he had misjudged her altogether. He waited, almost breathlessly, for a line from Françoise, and lost his appetite if that line was delayed. Before long his eagerness deepened into passion.

When Françoise returned from the mountains, she was hailed by him as the "soul of his court," and his "chief confidante." Meanwhile, Madame de Montespan, recognizing her as a sinister rival, was fairly devoured by jealousy. She herself had great beauty and a brilliant intellect, but absolutely no

sense and no tact. She irritated the king's nerves.

Françoise had tact and self-control. She had all the qualities which suited Louis best. De Montespan had a wild-cat temper and a bitter, caustic tongue which she did not try to govern. Françoise was never out of temper, and only used her wit when the king needed smoothing down.

Montespan was a "tigress in ringlets." In helpless fury at her rival's rapid rise to favor, she stormed and scolded, then fled to love philters, and, it was whispered, to poisons.

"One of us must leave court!" she finally declared. One of them did, but it was the cast-off Madame de Montespan.

Françoise's hold over the king grew stronger and stronger. She "guided him into an unknown country—friendship and conversation, where there was no intrigue or constraint." She appealed to his torpid conscience, which was never quite asleep.

"I accepted his friendship," she writes in self-justification, "to give him good counsels, break the chain of his mistresses, and lead him back to the queen."

The queen, by the way, regarded her as nothing less than an angel. In the summer of 1683, this same luckless queen suddenly died—in Françoise's arms.

Long before her death, the king had besought Françoise to give him her love. But she had steadily refused. The more firmly she refused to become his, the more desirable she grew. He coveted her as he had never coveted any one.

On the day of the queen's death, the Duc de la Rochefoucauld accosted Françoise as she left the death chamber.

"The king demands your presence at once," he said.

Before she really knew what was happening, Louis had carried her off

in the royal carriage to St. Cloud. His daughter-in-law got wind of it, and started hot on their trail. Louis sent back his physician with orders to "bleed her well," which effectually stopped pursuit.

Five days later, "bled white, but determined," this daughter-in-law, the dauphine, burst breathlessly into the palace at Fontainebleau and found herself just about five days late to play propriety. Madame de Maintenon was cozily settled in the royal apartments, and no daughter-in-law could oust her.

The king continued to adore Françoise and to regard her "as his conscience, his consolation, and his good angel."

Even her bitterest enemy, the Duchess of Orleans, declared that he "loved old Madame Wish-wash better than any of his mistresses." Her influence over the king was always for good, and always increasing. The greatest proof of this was shown in 1684 or 1685, when, strange to say, the pair were secretly married, at dead of night, in an improvised chapel at Versailles.

From that time on Françoise ruled the court and was treated as nearly like a queen as was possible. Louis was always finding excuses to pay regal honors to her.

Her enemies grew purple with anger, telling how "in a court where spoons and cushions had a mystic significance, where the stool of the mere duchess was carefully distinguished from the straight-backed chair of the princess, and an armchair was the sacred symbol of a reigning sovereign, Maintenon's drawing-room was furnished with two of these armchairs: one for herself and one for the king."

Yet the super-woman's demeanor was always modest at state functions. She never traded on her power. Perhaps that is why she kept it for thirty-one years—as long as the king lived. Nor did her tact ever desert her. Even at

seventy-five years of age, with a body wracked by rheumatism, she used to go to meets of the royal hounds with the aged king, once saying whimsically, as she was helped into her cloak:

"No tastes are allowed here but the master's, and stag hunting was never one of mine!"

In the palace she resigned herself "to die, symmetrically, of drafts," as Louis would not allow anything to be done to stuff the rattling windows.

As time went on, he grew more and more dependent on her and more and more tyrannical. Rather than be separated a moment from his beloved Françoise, he used to hold cabinet meetings in her bedchamber after she had retired for the night, often keeping her awake for hours by the rattling of papers and the discussions of his ministers, when her worn-out body cried for sleep and she nearly strangled trying to keep from disturbing the conclave by coughing.

She was never left alone.

"The curse of my life is that I've neither leisure nor occupation," she used to say.

When at last the king died, Françoise took her tired body to St. Cyr, the convent which she had founded years before. Here she was regarded as a patron saint. And here, no longer

weighted down by "the unendurable ennui of unimaginable greatness"—as she described her brilliant court life—she spent her last days in peace and quiet, writing proverbs and maxims for the guidance of the convent girls.

"Have nothing to fear, nothing to hide, and nothing to regret," was one of these maxims.

"There is nothing so clever as never being in the wrong," was another saying of hers.

In all her long life, she did not once lose her head to her heart. Yet one cannot wonder at this, for as a child there was no one to love her. She said that her mother had kissed her but twice in her life. She had to think for herself, act for herself. Hers was not an easy life; it was a long life of plans.

Her last years were spent in perfect seclusion, but many visitors sought audience with her. On April 15, 1719, she closed her tired eyes for the last time with a sigh of relief.

Her astonishing destiny is summed up thus by Philip Wharton:

"Born in prison, bred in poverty, widow of a cripple, wife of a king, respectable yet not virtuous, pious yet not religious, the daughter of a needle-woman, she ruled France in its grandest days."



WIND IN MY HAIR

WIND in my hair
And the twinkling leaves
Of the birches. Sun and air
On their cool, white limbs,
Slender and fair
As a dryad's. Strange hymns,
Blown to my ears,
Lure me from laws of man
To soulless laughter,
Forsaking a god of tears
To follow after
The pagan rites of Pan.

MARGARET PECKHAM.



That's the Proper Spirit

By Gene Markey

Author of "Thursday for Crosses,"
"The Crazy Man," etc.

THERE was no man in the world more genuinely interested in the affairs of Mr. M. F. H. Sims III. than old Smollett, his butler. And when indications began pointing to a marriage between M. F. H. Sims III. and Mrs. Fox, the beautiful young widow, Smollett became alarmed.

For he had seen Mrs. Fox—at a dinner Monty had given in her honor—and he did not like her. Besides, it was far pleasanter serving in the household of a bachelor than in an establishment which contained a wife. Smollett, having been married once or twice himself, was in position to see the thing from all angles.

He had assured himself, on the evening of the dinner at "Fairways," Mr. Sims' country place, that Mrs. Fox was not a suitable candidate for the name and fortune of his young master. She was beautiful, to be sure, but Smollett, being an unerring judge of human nature, was able to see, beneath the glamour of her exterior, a certain cheapness—of which the infatuated Monty was, of course, unaware. Having been for years a butler, Smollett was naturally a bit selfish, and his prejudice against the widow was not entirely due to his loyalty to Mr. Sims. He had, upon looking the lady over, decided that it would be quite impossible for him to remain, should she become mistress of Fairways. And, since it was out of the question for him to leave Mr. Sims' service, there was but one course left

open. Mrs. Fox must be got rid of—in some way or other.

But the problem was not an easy one, and the more Smollett pondered, the more difficult it became. He had, naturally, a certain amount of influence over his young employer, but this influence had rarely extended beyond the selection of a particular vintage of burgundy, or the arrangement of a dinner menu. He had never been consulted on Mr. Sims' *affaires de cœur*, and therefore it was quite impossible for him to suggest, in any way, that the beautiful widow was unworthy. Should he attempt such an unbutlerly procedure, the chances were that he should find himself, by evening, scanning the "Help Wanted" columns of the newspapers. For Mr. Sims, besides being outrageously susceptible to the wiles of femininity, was outrageously stubborn about his infatuations. Smollett recalled what a time every one had experienced last year in keeping him from marrying Miss Estelle de Vere, who, by nature, was a gold digger supreme, and by profession, star of the "Oh, Doctor!" company.

It wasn't going to be easy to get him to give up Mrs. Fox. He was pretty badly infatuated. Smollett had seen that the evening of the dinner, and, too, he had observed that a vulgarly large photograph of the lady reposed on Monty's dressing table. It was serious enough when their photographs reached the mantel in his sleep-

ing room, but when they were put on the *dressing table*—

However, the old butler was not without hope. It had been his experience that the photographs in the sleeping room changed with almost the rapidity of slides at a stereopticon lecture. Rarely did the same one remain long, for M. F. H. Sims III., like most susceptible men, was notoriously fickle. It was one of the chief diversions of his servants, on evenings when he was out, to sit in the trunk room on the third floor, poring over the contents of two trunks, one of which contained dozens of photographs of beautiful women; the other, bundles upon bundles of love letters, some of them classic. Mr. Sims never took the trouble to lock either of these trunks; it was too frequently necessary to add to their store.

Always in the past Monty had proved himself a skillful sailor, had steered adroitly out to sea again, when threatened with the danger of going aground on the rocks of matrimony. But this time Smollett was worried. He had seen him holding Mrs. Fox's hands, and gazing into her eyes with a foolish look which only comes over men's faces during the first four weeks of a love affair, and the widow was demurely inspecting the third finger of her left hand and talking in honeyed tones of the perfectly lovely rings in Spaulby's window.

It looked pretty bad. Smollett was genuinely disturbed, and yet, even as he sat frowning over his coffee in the servants' dining room, an idea twinkled brightly in the back of his bald skull. The frown relaxed, and, rising, he sought Mr. Sims' sleeping room on the second floor, knocked discreetly, and entered.

The young gentleman was sitting upon the edge of his canopied bed, yawning at the flood of morning sunshine from the windows, and allowing

Goro, his Jap valet, to draw on a pair of green silk hose.

"Good morning, sir," greeted Smollett.

"M'r-r-r-ing," said Monty, finishing his yawn.

"If I might be permitted, sir, I should like to ask the day off."

"Day off, Smollett?" Mr. Sims yawned again.

"Yes, sir. I've not asked a day off in several weeks. To-day is Thursday, sir."

"Certainly," nodded the young man. "Yes, 'ndeed, Smollett, go right ahead."

"Thank you, sir."

Then Mr. Sims turned to his valet.

"Goro," he said, between yawns, "get Mrs. Fox's apartment on the phone, and tell her I'll be about five minutes late."

As Smollett left the room he could not help hearing these directions, and the thoughtful frown returned to his brow. It was not going to be easy. The widow certainly had a desperate influence over Monty, and if anything was to be done it must be done quickly.

Now Smollett, being a wise, old butler, had, upon learning of his employer's infatuation for Mrs. Fox, looked up the lady's social standing. She lived, he had ascertained, in an expensive apartment on the Drive, moved in unquestionably fashionable circles—which was not difficult in Chicago—and had in her service a personal maid who had been with her ten years. It was this last bit of information which gave Smollett his idea. He had a friend, another butler, who had a friend, somebody's housekeeper, who knew Mrs. Fox's personal maid, and, to-day being Thursday, the national weekly holiday for servants, it would be possible to see these people.

With meticulous care Smollett changed to his street attire, spending considerable time in the selection of a

fancy waistcoat and an effulgent scarf. In his younger days he had been acknowledged, in the servants' hall, something of a beau, and there was a definite object in his elaborate toilet this morning. It would be well to make a favorable impression on Mrs. Fox's maid.

Monty had met Flora Fox at Palm Beach, whither he had repaired in March with his great friend Artie Bangs, not because he liked Palm Beach, but because there was nothing better to do. The place had always rather bored him, yet it must be confessed that, being a man, he enjoyed the obvious adulation of the ladies there—the flappers and their wary mammas, and the young matrons whose husbands were in New York—in short, all of them.

Monty, you see, was generally acknowledged a catch. His mother was outrageously wealthy, he had an aunt who was a duchess, he himself had something of a reputation for his polo, and he wasn't at all bad looking. All of which, in addition to his known susceptibility, made him rather a desirable catch, and many of the mammas at Palm Beach had been angling for him three or four seasons. But that good fortune which is known to hover over inebriated gentlemen, motorists, and others had somehow managed to save him from being hooked.

Flora Fox, after the demise of her last husband, had found herself somewhat high and dry financially. The late Mr. Fox had been an undersized Chicago stockbroker, with a receding chin and a penchant for betting on horse racing. Two hours after his escape from this vale of tears, Flora had his lawyers on the phone, only to be told that, had Strawberry won the day before at Louisville, Mrs. Fox would have been worth a fortune; as it was, Strawberry having lost the race, well, et cetera, et cetera—

It was up to her to find another husband, and, being a wily woman, she at once wired Pudge & Co., in New York. Now Pudge & Co. were matrimonial agents de luxe. It was their business to keep track of hotel registers at the various fashionable resorts, and to catalogue, unknown to their victims, all eligible financial catches. The day after her telegram, came a special-delivery letter, announcing the personnel of the Florida places, and Mrs. Fox, with a Dianalike light in her eyes, turned to Palm Beach. The eligibles were classified below:

| NAME | RES. | FINAN. CLASS | HOTEL |
|-------------------|---------------|--------------|------------|
| Morris Blum | St. Louis | A | Palatial |
| Henry J. Kidd | N. Y. | B | Gargantuan |
| I. Rosenberg | N. Y. | B | Palatial |
| Jack Pillsted | Chicago | A | Gargantuan |
| O. Harold Sharp | Colo. Springs | A | Regal |
| M. F. H. Sims III | Chicago | A | Regal |

Flora stopped reading. She had never met M. F. H. Sims III., but she had often seen pictures of him in those magazines which are devoted to pictures of the latest fashions and the latest fashionable people. She recalled that his home was really in New York, but that, for some reason or other, he preferred to live in Chicago. She recalled, too, that the Chicago papers made much of him, and that he was the star of the Arrogantsia Club polo team. The Pudge announcement showed him to be financially Class "A." There was nothing else to it. Mrs. Fox wired immediately for rooms at the Regal Hotel, and departed for Palm Beach.

It had been an amazing campaign. When she arrived, M. F. H. Sims III. was dividing his time between two flappers, Elizabeth McHenry, of Pittsburgh, and the Plum girl, of Boston, whose bathing suits and dancing shocked every one so.

Now there is something about a widow—whatever it is— Anyway, at the end of the first week Monty was running circles around Mrs. Fox, try-

ing in vain to be introduced to her. But the lady saw to it that he wasn't—yet. A game of Fox and Goose, Artie Bangs called it. However, on the eighth day after her arrival, young Mr. Sims did manage to meet her, on the ninth he proposed to her, and on the tenth she left for Chicago, just to see if he'd follow. He did. And that was the beginning of the infatuation which was causing such concern on the part of Smollett, Mr. Sims' faithful butler.

The Ricketts, Julia and Jerome, are proprietors of a little restaurant on North State Street. Jerome Ricketts was formerly a butler; his wife, Julia, a lady's maid, and their place of business is the rendezvous of Chicago's fashionable servants.

It was here, at tea time on this particular Thursday, that Smollett, through the machinations of his friends, was presented to Miss Gussie Dibble, Mrs. Fox's maid. Miss Dibble proved to be a plethoric, determined-looking woman, of doubtful age and disposition, but the masterful Smollett set about gaining her confidence, and by dinner time they were old friends.

Now Smollett, by reason of his being the only English butler on the North Shore who had ever seen England, was something of a personage at Ricketts', and Gussie Dibble was not slow in perceiving this. His obvious attentions flattered her, just as he knew they would, and when, at ten o'clock, after having dined together and witnessed a photo play, they were sitting on a bench in Lincoln Park, looking at the moon, his arm was around her waist, and she was telling him all about Mrs. Fox.

"Smollett," said Monty Sims, spooning his grapefruit reflectively, "do you know anything about Spiritualism?"

"Spiritism, sir?" Smollett had a very skillful way of correcting his employer's errors of speech.

"I mean Spiritism. Know anything about it?"

Now Smollett, being an Englishman, hated to admit his knowledge on *any* subject was deficient. Moreover, he had an intuitive feeling that all this had something to do with the widow.

"The reason I ask," went on Monty, "is because Mrs. Fox is hipped on the subject."

"Really, sir?" Smollett suddenly found himself displeased that Gussie Dibble had omitted to tell him this. She had, to be sure, told him enough about Mrs. Fox, but she had not mentioned Spiritism.

"Yes," continued Mr. Sims. "Clean gone on the subject. This old bird, Sir Rollo Hodge, who was over here from England last fall, got her going." He sighed. "I guess there's nothing for me to do but take it up, too. She wants me to."

Smollett looked down compassionately upon the lovelorn young man. He really felt very sorry for him. If only he dared tell him the things he had learned from Gussie Dibble—how the widow had had three husbands, whereas she admitted but one; how her shrewish temper had been the death of all three; how she was really thirty-five, though she claimed to be Monty's own age, twenty-six, and various other facts, intimate boudoir secrets which the trusting Gussie had confided in him. If only he dared tell Mr. Sims these things! But, of course, he dared not, and Mr. Sims was going on blindly, deeper and deeper into the mire of infatuation.

"Ever been to a séance?" asked the young man, looking up.

"No, sir."

"Neither've I. Got to go to one to-night."

An idea tingled suddenly in the back of Smollett's cranium. It seemed such a capital idea that his voice trembled slightly as he asked his next question:

"Do you—happen to know, sir, where the séance is to be?"

"I'm not sure," answered Monty. "All I know is that her favorite medium is some bird named Winkle; he lives somewhere on Dearborn Street."

"I beg pardon, sir," said Smollett, after making a mental note of the name and street. "But will it be convenient, sir, if I go to town this morning? I've an appointment with a dentist, but I shall be back for luncheon, sir."

"Go right ahead," nodded Monty magnanimously, and, when the butler had left the room, fell to staring out the window. He was wondering if, after all, Flora wasn't getting just a *bit* too much of an upper hand. This Spiritism business, for instance—why couldn't she have kept on without insisting on dragging *him* in?

Mr. Solomon Winkle was a pale, shifty-eyed, nervous, little man, with a bushy mustache and some ill-fitting black clothes. There was nothing mysterious or spooky about his house in Dearborn Street. It was just an ordinary house, and Mr. Winkle was, to all appearances, just an ordinary man. He looked as if he should have been a suburban grocer.

"Doubtless," said the suave Smollett, when the two were seated in a dingy "parlor" off the hallway, "doubtless you are unaware of the purpose of my call."

"I s'pose," said the shifty-eyed Mr. Winkle, "you want to arrange a séance."

"Precisely," smiled the butler, and reaching inside his coat he produced a packet of crisp, new bank notes.

The medium eyed this display with interest, and ran a twitching finger over his mustache.

"I think," he coughed, "that we won't have any trouble in arranging——"

"The fact is," Smollett leaned forward confidentially, "I merely wanted

to talk to you about a séance which I believe is to take place here to-night—for Mrs. Fox."

"Mrs. Fox? Yes."

"Here is the point," and lowering his voice, Monty Sims' faithful butler outlined his plan.

"Impossible!" cried the little man when he had heard. "*Im-possible!*"

Smollett flicked the edges of the bank notes lightly.

"That is to say," coughed Mr. Winkle, eying the currency, "it's entirely outside professional ethics to—consider such a thing!"

Smollett appeared not to have heard. He was counting the money, and the crisp, new bills rustled alluringly.

"Of *course*," said the medium, squirming in his chair, "of course I—I——"

"Precisely," nodded Smollett, with a bland smile, "I knew we could come to terms."

And continuing to caress the bank notes with his fingers, he told Mr. Winkle just what he was to do.

"You get half of this *now*," he said, recovering his hat, "and the rest to-night—*after* the séance. I shall be here. I want you to put me in the next room. Everything understood?"

"Oh, certainly," agreed the medium jerkily. "Certainly—yes, indeed."

It was very dark in the room, and as he sat in the mystic circle, Monty was not perfectly at ease. He had, a moment before, transferred his watch and purse to a secure pocket inside his waistcoat. You never could tell, you know. He did not exactly fancy the neighborhood, and as for this dark room——

Of course, it was pleasant to be holding Flora's hand, but the woman on the other side, whose clammy hand clutched his, was apparently afflicted with St. Vitus' dance or some similar trouble,

for her hand shook so that it jiggled his whole arm most annoyingly.

After an interminable wait, a mysterious light appeared in the center of the room, illuminating an old-fashioned couch, on which lay a pale, little man with a ragged mustache, apparently asleep.

In the eerie light, Monty could dimly make out the staring faces of the people who sat around in the circle, holding hands, and he felt the least bit uncomfortable. Mrs. Fox, who was an ardent Spiritist, was leaning forward, gazing intently at the little man on the couch.

After a minute or two, the little man was seen to shudder violently in his sleep, and, as he shuddered, so, with acceleration, did the dreadful woman on Monty's left. Mrs. Fox whispered something—he couldn't hear what it was—and, of a sudden, the medium's quaking ceased, and he was heard to utter a few guttural grunts.

"It's Chief Wah-Wah-Tay-See," came Mrs. Fox's tense whisper, and, with a start, Monty observed the little man spring from the couch and hop gruntingly about the circle, in the approved manner of an Indian war dance.

The whole thing seemed highly ludicrous to Monty, and he would have laughed, had not the creature on his left been jiggling his arm so annoyingly. Then, suddenly the little man's amazing war dance ceased, and he appeared to collapse on the couch. For a moment or two he reclined there, inert, then the violent shuddering seized him again. When this was over, he lay quiet for a few seconds, then, in a sepulchral voice, spoke:

"Isadore. Is there any one—named Isadore—here?"

A gasp was heard from one of the dim figures across the circle.

"Abie is here," came the medium's voice. "He wants to talk to you."

"Ask him," said the dim figure excitedly, "ask him, should I sell the store?"

There was a moment's silence. Monty was aware of a tickling sensation along the edge of his scalp. Then came the medium's voice again:

"No. He says not to sell—the store."

"Ask him," came the nasal request, "ask him, should I buy fall cloaks 'nd suits now, oder vill prices go down?"

"He says—buy now. Prices will not—go down."

At this Monty evinced a skeptical grin in the semidarkness.

The medium was stirring in his trance.

"He is gone. Abie is gone."

"'S all right," said the man across the circle. "Vat I wanted to know, I found out!"

Then, after a little silence, another fit of shuddering seized the figure on the couch, more violent than before, and, as if speaking with difficulty, came his voice:

"Is there—any one named—Flora—here?"

M. F. H. Sims III. felt a tremor run through the arm of Mrs. Fox, felt her grip on his hand tighten.

"I am—Flora," she said in a low, trembling voice.

The medium squirmed a moment.

"Some one," he said, "is trying to commune with you—I can't get him. Ah! Yes—Herbert is here—Herbert wants to speak to you."

"Herb!" cried Mrs. Fox, leaning forward.

"Herb," whispered Monty. "Who's he?"

"Mr. Fox," she answered, in an agitated voice.

"Herb is here," droned the medium. "Is there anything you want to ask him?"

"Yes, yes! Ask him if he is happy in the spirit world."

There was a pause.

"Yes—he says he is happy—much happier than he ever was with you."

The startled Mr. Sims was aware that Flora was making funny sounds in her throat.

"He wants to talk to you," went on the medium. "There is something he is trying to say to you. Oh, yes. He says he has seen Egbert and Claude—your other husbands. He says that all three of them are working for you in the spirit world—so that you may get over your awful disposition—which made their lives so wretched on earth."

Monty was staring open-mouthed at the man in the trance who was so calmly uttering these uncanny words.

"He says," continued the voice, "that you must not marry the young man you met at Palm Beach. You are only marrying him for his money—and you would make his life desperately unhappy—even as you did theirs—he says—"

But here the message from the spirit world was interrupted by a gasping cry from Flora Fox. Monty felt his hand dropped with a violence that startled him, and heard a chair scrape and a rustle of silk. When he looked around, the place which had been occupied by the fascinating widow was empty. Flora had fled.

It was a beautiful April morning. As Smollett ascended the stairs with Mr. Sims' newspaper, bright patterns of sunlight were playing over the balustrade, and through an open window came the fragrant breath of spring. Smollett was in unusually high good humor, humming under his breath as he went, a ditty he had once heard in a London music hall:

"First she had some marmalade,
And then she had some jam,
Then some dozen of oysters,
And then a plate of ham,
A lobster and a crab or two,
And a pint of bottled beer,
A little gin hot to settle the lot—
And that's what made her queer."

It really was a jolly morning to be alive. Spring, and all that sort of thing, you know!

At Mr. Sims' door he paused, coughed lightly, and knocked.

"Yes?"

Opening the door, he bowed ceremoniously into the room.

"Good morning, sir."

"Morning, Smollett."

The young gentleman was sitting on the edge of his canopied bed, in a not unfamiliar attitude, while Goro, his Jap valet, kneeled to lace his oxfords. But there was, somehow, a different expression on his face.

Smollett glanced hastily about the chamber. The large photograph of Mrs. Fox, which had reposed on the dressing table, was gone.

"Lovely morning, sir," beamed Smollett.

"Um—yes."

"I brought your paper, sir," handing it to him.

"Thank you, Smollett. Breakfast ready?"

"Yes, sir, as soon as you are down."

"Um." Mr. Sims was staring vacantly out the window.

"Would there be anything else, sir?"

"No, thanks." He turned and looked at his butler queerly. "You know, I told you I was going to a séance last night? Well, I went."

"You did, sir?"

"Yes. And, say, Smollett, there's something to this Spiritism thing, after all!"





The Arrant Rover

By Berta Ruck

Author of "His Official Flancée," "The Girls at His Billet,"
"Sweet Stranger," etc.

THE STORY SO FAR.

Archie Laverock is by profession an arrant rover. Temporarily he is connected with a London motor firm. Tooling along the Surrey lanes one afternoon, he comes upon a beautiful young woman who is being brutally treated by her husband. Laverock rescues her gallantly, carries her home in his car, and discovers that she is Lucy Joy, winner of the *Daily Periscope* beauty contest, and was merely acting for the cinema. He meets her family—mummie, auntie, and Frankie, the young midshipman brother. He meets also several of Lucy's venerable admirers. Prominent among them is the admiral. Several days later he runs across the admiral on his way to the Joy household with an invitation to his birthday party in town. Archie takes a short cut across country, reaches the Joy family first, and they promise to celebrate his birthday at his camp. The admiral, coming in second, retaliates by leaving an important sealed note for Miss Lucy Joy.

CHAPTER V.

NOT until seven o'clock that evening was Laverock free to begin preparation for his party.

He reached camp to find Captain Smith tying a white tie with the aid of the shaving glass hung on the tent pole.

"Here, none of that," Archie ordered. "You don't dress, please. Nobody's going to dress. It's not in the picture; spoil the whole thing."

"But," the young Indian-army man protested, "I'm running up to town by the seven-forty; I thought I'd look in on some people at the——"

"Impossible, I'm afraid," said Archie good-temperedly. "You can't leave this evening, Smith; you're the orchestra."

"The what?"

"The orchestra, the band, the man who plays the banjo for these ladies to-night."

"Ladies?"

"Who are coming to supper here."

"Here?"

"Yes; don't go on like the echo at a lakeside resort, and don't let's have that old story about your being terrified of women. Be a tower of strength and get back out of those glad rags," said Archie, himself simmering with inward trepidation. She was coming, and he wanted everything to be "right" as possible. That is, as "different" as possible. He wasn't going to have Smith sitting there looking just like any

glossy, well-to-do young man at her usual supper party. Nothing was to be like that. Everything was to be in abrupt, complete, and vivid contrast—the people, the surroundings, the food.

"Dinner for seven to-night, Parkin; no, we are eight," he told the groundsman rapidly. "You've got chops, haven't you, and those tins of beans, and potatoes, and there's plenty of beer? Have lemonade and some Emu burgundy for the ladies, and you'll have to manage a sweet of some sort, sponge cake and fruit with custard over it or something, and——"

"Mr. Laverock, sir!" broke in Parkin with reproach. "It can't be done. Can't be done. Not the sweets and fruit. No time to run up to London and get them now. And it's early closing day in this place, which you gentlemen are always forgetting. Now, if I'd have known this morning that you was expecting company to dinner—and ladies, too—I maybe would have been able to manage something; but as it is, why——"

"Sergeant," said ex-Captain Laverock very quietly, "see what you can do, will you? I'm sure you'll knock up something, all right!" he added, with a look and the laugh that had caused it to be said of him, in a previous existence, that the men would do anything for that youngster. "Dinner at eight, or better say a quarter past."

"Very good, sir," from Parkin, resigned.

Five minutes later Archie's other stable companions arrived to find him scouring a trestle table lugged out of the pavilion and set on a smooth piece of turf near the railings. Captain Smith, meanwhile, was preparing the table decorations by cramming into jam jars bouquets composed of cowslips, bluebells, lilac, pansies, and southernwood, all tied up together very tightly with string.

"Hul—lo! Whose birthday's this?"

demanding the young man who worked on the railway. "Are you expecting anybody over to-night, Laverock? By Jove! Three ladies and a man? But, man, the dinner! Who's going to cook?"

"Who generally cooks?" retorted Archie without looking up from his scrubbing. "I told them it was pot luck and that we'd have to give them what we always have ourselves."

"They little dreaming what muck that is," commented the young man who worked in the city. "Who is the—er—principal lady this time, Laverock? I hope she's accustomed to roughing it? Has she lived out in the colonies or was she on farm work during the war, or something of that sort? Because if so——"

"I don't know what she did during the war," replied young Laverock lightly, as he dropped the scrubbing brush back into the bucket. "She's acting for the cinema now."

"Cinema? Is she, by Jove?" All three young men pricked up their ears. "Where did you meet her? Who is she? Anybody one's ever heard of?"

This was Archie's moment. His face showed more of a small schoolboy's exultation than the amusement of a grown-up man—one says this forgetting the fact that there is no such thing as a "grown-up" man—as he replied:

"Her name is Miss Lucy Joy."

Sensation. Then incredulity. "You're rotting." Then the buzz of comment.

"Lucy Joy? Not the Lucy Joy?"

"The *Periscope* girl?"

"Good heavens, Laverock, you know her?"

"Obviously, or I shouldn't have invited her over with the whole of her family, should I?" retorted young Laverock, to whom all this was even as honey from the honeycomb. Lucy Joy! The name was as well known that spring as, say, Delysia or the Lenglen. And

she was coming here, to this crazy rubbish heap of a camp by the railway line, at the invitation of him, Archie Laverock, who was nobody in particular.

"Have you known her long, you dark horse?"

"Not very."

"Why, there's something about her in to-day's *London Mail*! I read it in the train coming down," blurted out the young man from the city. "Look here—oh, no, it was in another paper, perhaps."

But Archie had swiftly caught the magazine from him and had turned to the gossiping column head. The very first paragraph ran:

WHAT WE WANT TO KNOW.

What is it that takes the admiral down so often to a certain blue bungalow in Surrey, and if his daughters may shortly expect a bolt from the blue?

Whether Miss Lucy Joy, although a thing of beauty, intends to remain a joy very much longer?

"Awful rot they put in these rags!" grunted young Laverock, carefully folding the paper to stow it out of sight. "What's that, Parkin? Well, if we haven't another tablecloth, we haven't, that's all. What's the matter with clean boards?"

His friends gazed upon this youth. The utter cheek of him, inviting celebrity to this squalor!

"I suppose you're sure she's coming?" suggested the young man. "One always hears that theatricals—well, they vow they're coming for the fun of it, and then fail to materialize. The most unreliable crowd on earth."

Archie glared at him over the jam pots of flowers.

"The Joys aren't exactly 'theatricals,'" he explained stiffly. "Miss Joy has only been gazing in for this since that competition affair. Of course she is coming." This with added composure

8

because he himself felt far from certain on this point.

Suppose she didn't come? Found it too late, too much of a drag to get back from her rehearsal? Yet his faith was rewarded.

At eight o'clock the visitors arrived, all four of them.

To young Laverock there was only one.

Here she rose, the star, radiant as any of her photographs strewn all over the country. And the three young men, Archie's friends, who had begun by eying the guests with that concentration plus embarrassment of a shy curate in the presence of bazaar-opening royalty, themselves fell helpless victims to the charm of the cinema beauty, and, happily, to the charm of her family as well. Frankie, on catching the name of the young city man, discovered that his younger brother had been at Dartmouth with him. This made them into old friends even as the rickety chairs were allotted and the black-handled knives taken up.

The city man "carved" the chops, and with an ineffable glance toward the star guest asked, "May I give you beans?" This nursery wit was loudly applauded, and what remained of the ice was broken by Captain Smith's inquiring diffidently of Mrs. Harrison, "Miss Joy, shall you stay on 'the screen,' or whatever you call it, for good, or shall you go on the regular stage presently?"

"Ah! Very pretty!" cried auntie gayly. "I didn't dare hope any one would really make the mistake, even in the dusk with the light behind me. But you know that Lucy is to go on the real stage presently, don't you, Mr. Laverock? No potatoes, thanks—yes, yes, I will! They're not burned; they're delicious! Yes; don't you read your *Periscope*?"

"Didn't you see the latest excitement

for our peaceful family circle, Laverock——"

"Yes, the part in the new De Courville revue?"

"Are you really, Miss Joy——"

"What's more, I'm having a scent named after me now!" the bijou beauty announced with pride. "You know, like Chaminade or Mary Garden! People sniffing at a sachet and saying, 'Oh, it's Lucy Joy.'"

"Disgustin' thought, I call it!" from Frankie, hewing bread.

Then simultaneous queries from mummie and auntie: "But what is the nicest hotel to stay at in Paris just now? Because, you know, Lucy's revue will be coming on over there——"

"Oh," said young Laverock evenly, "she's going away, going over to France, is she?"

"Yes, and what she'll be like when she's the prattle of Paris as well as the talk of London Town, I shudder to think," from Frankie. "Personally, I shall have to disown her, and, the next time anybody in the ship asks me if I'm any relation, I shall simply say, 'Oh, no, I never heard of the young woman, so snubs!'"

Laughter, through which there rose a treble shriek from mummie. "Oh! Talking of ships! Good heavens! It's just reminded me. That note. From the admiral!"

Involuntary glances about from Archie's friends to see what had become of that *London Mail*.

"Yes! The admiral's note! I promised him I'd let Lucy have it the very instant she got in. Then I never thought of it again. How ghastly of me!" cried little Mrs. Joy. "Here you are, my pet——"

She burrowed in her beaded bag and handed the note across the table.

Lucy was sitting between Archie Laverock and the young city man, to whom assuredly it was the evening of his life, to be remembered and spoken

of for many moons among his pals; "There's a fellow in our office who's met Lucy Joy!"

The beauty girl took the note, said prettily, "Oh, may I open it? It's probably about the race to-morrow, and I might have to telephone at once," and tore open the envelope.

She read the note. There escaped her a little, "Oh, dear. Oh!" of agitation.

"What is it, darling? Anything wrong?" chirped her mother anxiously.

For there were only two people at that table who guessed correctly at the contents of that note. Mrs. Harrison's blue eyes sent a quick, comprehending glance across the table. Archie Laverock, outwardly imperturbable, told himself: "Ha! The old boy's trumping my card, is he?"

Lucy, pulling herself together, crammed the note into her brocade sack and chirped back: "Oh, no, mummie! It—it's nothing that need be answered at once——"

"What it is to belong to the ruling sex!" broke in the semibaritone of Frankie at the other end of the table. "Wilt trifle?" He passed the sweet in a lordly dish quite unfamiliar to the campites, produced somewhence by Parkin. "Jolly nice trifle, too. Figure to yourselves, though, what would happen if I were not to 'answer at once' any of our distinguished friends' messages! Dost remember Kipling's admiral and the snotty? If Lucy'd been a boy, as she always wished she was, she'd have the admiral in 'the attitude of God Almighty to a cockroach,' instead of——"

"Used I to wish I were a boy, Frankie? What extraordinary things one wants when one's quite young. I'm sure I should never wish for anything so silly now!" declared the girl, with a little, uncertain laugh that drew upon her the eyes of Archie Laverock.

She avoided them with completeness.

Archie had once been told by a woman that this avoidance was often more of a compliment than the tenderest return glance. But was it so in this case? Tension tingled in the young man's mind. The air was full of it, and the golden evening that was fading into dusk about the table. Archie felt mad-deningly alive all over, to-night, conscious of every detail about him—the fresh smell of trodden grass, the voices of belated tennis players farther down the sports ground, the rooks dotting the primrose sky, the flowerlike patches of color made by the women's hats and frocks about the homely table, the plain dishes, the cottage nose-gays. At the same time he was conscious only of her, her sweet bird's note twittering to one of his friends.

"Who is going to sing to us? Didn't Mr. Laverock say one of you had a banjo?"

"Ah, yes! Wilt banj'?" from Frankie, springing up. "Can't I lend a hand to clear away these things?"

Ten minutes later all sign of the Lockhartian feast had disappeared. Archie and the others had dragged from his tent the two camp beds to make a settee for the ladies; he had lighted the big Japanese lanterns which hung outside the tents less for use than for ornament. Above them the sky was now glooming into a soft mauve. Beyond the palings the lights of the station glowed ruby and emerald. It was cool and still and clear, but to Archie Laverock the whole air quivered with electricity.

He squatted next to Frankie on the rug close to her tiny feet. The other young men had brought out mackintoshes to sit on. Captain Smith, settled on an old sugar box, was plucking at the banjo strings.

"Sing your Punjabi love song," Archie commanded him, "the one about the plaything of love, could the world stand still, and all that——"

The docile Smith on the sugar box gathered together a twanging chord, lifted up a wistful tenor, and began:

"You've the tenderest, laughing, rosebud lips
that ever a man beguiled,
With thoughts of the devil, the world and
the——"

He broke off. "No; sorry——" He twanged more chords, seeming hastily to review suitable verses from that interminable serenade to which each frontier regiment adds its own translation. "That's the wrong one——"

"Oh, why——"

"No; carry on——"

"Yes, do go on with it," Mrs. Joy besought him. "I'm sure it's quite all right, because poor Tom used to sing it! What is that verse?"

"Your feet are as dainty as feet can be, and
your ankles a sight to see,
Which whenever you show, as you frequently
do, it has 'often occurred to me——"

Took up Captain Smith, encouraged:

"Though never a maid was so daintily made,
or such delicate lingerie wore,
I wish I could think that nobody else had
bought you silk stockings before."

Followed the verses about hair, the color of burnished gold that's lit by the setting sun, and celebrating the tender curve of a dear, young throat, while Archie Laverock, sitting at her feet in the spring twilight, listened to that song that was all of her.

Little princess! In her condescension she was here, pleased with the entertainment he had provided for her, Parkin's dinner, Smith's music.

Just a caprice, perhaps. Perhaps by to-morrow this much-run-after girl would have come to the end of the novelty of all this; she'd be tired of the thought of a young man without a penny who pigged it in a tent and ran about on errands for a motor firm, his whole year's salary amounting to what she could make by a month's contract. To-morrow it might be all over. But he,

Laverock, had scored over those other people to-night.

"Oh, plaything of love, could the world stand still,"

chanted Captain Smith to the heartrending running snarl of the strings.

"—and never the day be born,
And the cares of life be chased away, as the
night is chased by the morn!
Then queen of my heart I'd hold you fast,
and lord of your life would reign,
And never a soul, but only I, should rest in
those arms again,
And never a soul, but only I——"

The note hovered on a pause, a pause filled in by the distant calling of rooks, the nearer rumble of a train passing the station, by the clinking of dishes from wherever Parkin was washing up, and, so Archie would have imagined, by the thumping of his own disturbed young heart, calling to her who was so different from any girl whom he had yet met. *Plunk* from the banjo.

"Should rest in those arms again!"

Plunk, plunk, ended Captain Smith softly.

"Oh! Thank you, so much! That is so pretty!" twittered Mrs. Joy. "But, Madgie, used poor Tom to sing that last verse?"

"No; that's a kind of encore verse by a man called Meade, out there," explained Captain Smith, shifting the banjo. "Miss Joy, won't you sing now?"

"I can't really. I've no voice——"

"Only just enough for a whole theater, my pet? Oh, Lu, darling! She knows she has to sing for that revue man; she has the sweetest little voice! Not very strong, perhaps, but——"

"Mummie, I can't sing. Please. I am not going to sing."

"You will dance, though, won't you?" Archie turned his head quietly up toward her. "Where's the phonograph, Smith? Put on 'In Lilac Time,' that's a good record."

They danced under the stars, danced on the turf bordering the cinder track. Captain Smith waltzed with mummie; auntie's magpie black-and-white gleamed against the arm of the young city man; the railway lad cavorted burlesquely with Frankie. But as soon as Archie's long, brown fingers had taken to themselves the tiny ones of Lucy Joy, he knew that this was going to be "the" dance of his life. Even then he sensed a new influence in his life.

"In lilac time, in lilac time——" sang Frankie to the music as he swung past his sister and her partner.

Archie spoke down to her through the languorous tune. "I say," he began, "when are you going to Paris?"

"I don't know, Mr. Laverock. Soon, I expect. Why?"

Archie, circling with her, told her, "I shall be going away soon myself."

"Shall you? To Paris?"

"No. To Wales. I've a job on. To teach an old gentleman there to drive a car——"

"How interesting," said Lucy Joy.

"Do you think so?" said young Laverock, anger suddenly flaming up in him again. Why, *why* had he to put up with these "jobs on?" Why couldn't he follow her to Paris if he wanted? Why hadn't he got leisure and unlimited means and a Preillage Court at the back of him?

"It's a rotten job," he said curtly into the pretty, drawing melody, "but the old boy's an uncle or something to my firm's people, and he's got pots of money, too, and he wrote up yesterday to my firm and said he'd like them to send down the best man they had?"

"So—so they're sending you?"

"I'm at their beck and call. They're at his beck and call," returned Archie more cheerfully, "because they can't afford to dream of losing any money. No rich people can. My firm's so well off, you see."

"Horrible," said the girl on his arm,

"to be at people's beck and call like that——"

"Well! You are, aren't you?" Archie reminded her not too kindly, for he was stung, extra sensitive to-night. "Of course, it pays you better and all that——" Here he thought it was ghastly the things men found themselves saying to girls, just because they wanted to be talking of something utterly different, and mustn't! "But your cinema people and your stage managers and all that; they arrange what you've got to do, I suppose?"

"It's so different for a girl," the miniature beauty told him defiantly, as those absurd blue-kid shoes glided and "hesitated" in step to his boots. "Quite different. I—I could stop whenever I like, you see." Petulantly, "Couldn't I?" as he didn't answer. "Couldn't I?"

"Could you?" said Archie Laverock, sore—and curt.

She waltzed silently to the end of the turf then as they turned she threw at him with a sort of childish challenge, with something of the pride with which she'd announced that a new perfume was to be given her name, "A girl can get married, can't she, to somebody who'll—who'll give her a wonderful time and let her do whatever she likes?"

"Can she?"

"Why do you say that like that, Mr. Laverock?"

"Like what?"

"That. As it happens," added Lucy Joy, tilting her egg-shaped chin, "I had a proposal this very evening."

"I know you had," said Archie Laverock quickly, missing his step, then correcting it. "It's in your bag now."

"How did you know? How did you know?"

"I knew." He set shoulders and jaw.

"What are you going to say to it?"

"What?"

"What are you going to say to it? Accept?"

Lucy, with the defiance of a pecking

finch, demanded, "What has that got to do with you?"

"Nothing, of course. Only—well, you told me, yourself, the first part of it!" he reminded her. "Rather natural, isn't it, that I should want to know the rest?"

The urge in his heart began to break through the steadiness of his tone. The girl, hearing, drew a quicker breath. She countered, looking up, away, over his shoulder. "Is it?"

"Yes." Young Laverock suddenly dropped the quarreling note. Softly now he muttered, "Tell me what you're going to say to that man's proposal?"

"Why? Why should I?"

"Because I want to know," said he, and let his heart go into his voice at last. "I want to know, Lucy!"

At that she made a little movement, involuntary, sudden, as if she had been struck.

Auntie, passing that moment in the dance, caught a vivid, startling glimpse; to Laverock's profile, clean-cut and dark against the lambent rose of the nearest Japanese lantern, there looked up the face of Lucy, its innocent oval warmly lighted by the pink radiance, lips parted, eyes wide upon the young man; it was the face of a girl unmistakably adoring.

"Good heavens," gasped Mrs. Harrison to herself, and knew not whether to be delighted or appalled. "That child is now waking up! But is he reliable? Or is he one of those?"

Archie also held a question, so to speak, to his own head. Had the girl looked at him—like that? Or was it his own fatuous imagination?

For a trait well defined in the rover's character was that the first sign of inclination toward him on the part of any woman found him paradoxically, but genuinely incredulous. His pal, now, that well-meaning, but physically quite charmless son of the motor firm, was ever ready to confide to his fellows: "That little Miss So-and-so is getting

dashed keen on me, I'm afraid. I shall have to sheer off a point or two. One can't be too careful about these girls starting to get fond of one."

Some of that caution, superfluous in his pal's case, might often have been no bad thing for young Laverock or for the girl of the moment.

However! The next thing that happened was that this girl, Lucy, changed, in a second, that betraying look upon her face. Quite gallantly the little creature snatched at what had been dropping from her, namely, her teasing levity of every day. To Archie's question she tossed off one word:

"Guess!"

The boy, though wiser than most boys, was baffled again, could not be sure, after all, what to think. Did not know that the girl, all trembling secretly, had much ado to follow the promptings of the voice that has cried to generation after generation of women, "Conceal, conceal." Not always mistakenly.

In this case it was more politic than she suspected. For at that moment before, when he wondered, "Did she look at me? No! Is she, though?" a certain chill, not entirely unknown to him already, had begun to creep upon her lover.

"Oh, heavens!" Archie had thought, dismayed.

But now the chill left him, for she, the girl, achieved a brighter, more bird-like twitter than before.

"Seriously! Joking apart!" she mocked. "D'you always launch these paralyzingly heart-searching questions at the unfortunate individuals you've met exactly four times? You weird young man! As a matter of fact, I haven't made up my mind yet."

"Whether I'm 'weird' or not?" he muttered uncertainly.

"No. Whether or not I'm going to accept the ad—this last proposal, I

mean. Men always do expect one to settle in one brief instant of time whether one means to marry them for life! As for you——"

"Yes? Yes?"

"As for you, Mr. Laverock, I think you're just a seething mass of the most unabashed curiosity I ever met! Even if I had settled what I was going to do, what makes you so sure I'd tell you?"

So she teased and mocked and tantalized, and he could get nothing out of her. No, not by the time the phonograph record came to an end and began to spin round jarringly, to be snatched off by Captain Smith. Not after Frankie, exclaiming at the time of night, had begun to marshal his womenfolk off to the station. Not during the short walk down the field to the station, when the glamour girl had tripped along beside him as close as in the dance, so close that the scent of her filled his senses and the light touch of her against his coat kept him all athrill. She would not tell him what he fumed to know, laughing still, "What's it got to do with you? Why d'you ask?"

Why did he ask, indeed? It was not a question that he could have answered straight away, except with that nonexplanatory, "Because I want to know." Why must he know? Did he, truly, want her himself as he'd never wanted a girl before? Then why that chill when he thought she'd looked response at him? On the other hand, why this stabbing jealousy because another man——

"Tell me what you're going to do about it," he pestered softly, aflame because she laughed.

To the last moment he was kept in this suspense by that tiny tease. Even so she skipped into the lighted railway carriage ahead of her people, who clustered on the platform, made their farewells and promises to meet again. Even then there was nothing from her but a rather mischievous blue glance

and the upward tilt of the egg-shaped chin, another ripple of laughter.

No answer.

The train back to Waterloo had, like a long, fiery dragon, swallowed up his princess; with clashing and electric flashing it reft her away and fled, its wake of pale smoke, sequined in sparks, trailing across the dark signal boxes, the telegraph posts, the lights of ruby and emerald, the purple night sky.

Then, then at last, after she was gone, Archie Laverock found an answer to all his questions of the last pulsing hour.

"The" Lucy Joy, the pet of every illustrated paper in England, the sight to turn an old man young, the run-after screen star who was now to become the revue favorite and to rise from success to giddy success in London, Paris, New York, the exquisite pocket celebrity who could probably marry a duke, let alone a mere admiral, if she would—she had left her answer with this obscure young motor expert.

For as Archie strode up the dewy field back to the tents, he clenched his hands and dug them down into the pockets of his jacket. In the left-hand pocket his fingers encountered a crumple of something soft and unfamiliar. He pulled it out; by the lantern light he looked at it.

Heavens! How had it got there? Had she, as she walked beside him, tucked it secretly into his pocket?

Anyhow, here it was. A tiny square of cornflower-blue Georgette patterned with dots of vivid rose color, all crushed up and faintly scented with *Mystérieuse*.

The girl's handkerchief.

CHAPTER VI.

The result of this was to put the young man, in boyish parlance, "clean dead off."

He had two days in which to realize this fully before he saw his Lucy again. More than time enough. To the last,

however, he hoped that he was somehow mistaken. Why should this sort of thing have happened again? Already it had happened, of course. The rover didn't like to count how often. He merely felt sore and resentful because it was so. Everything was always so delightful up to a certain point. Then, somehow, he himself never could say exactly how, everything went and got itself spoiled. Infernal disappointment! To feel that this time you'd found something so thrillingly different, something that would change the whole of life and your own character for you, and then—to have it crumble in your hands, leaving nothing except the sick terror of being tied to the ruin!

"Still," thought young Laverock as he wheeled out Captain Smith's motor cycle for his Sunday expedition, "it may turn out all right when I get there."

He came upon Lucy just before he reached the blue bungalow. She was in the pine wood, gathering fir cones from the soft, terra-cotta carpet into a wide, flat basket she held.

"Oh! You've come!" she cried in a little, new-sounding voice. "We didn't think you could be here so soon!"

"No; as a matter of fact, I am a bit early," returned young Laverock gravely and politely across the motor cycle. His first glance at her told him the worst.

It was all over.

She was tremulously glad to see him.

Composure, self-possession, coquetry, sureness of her own little queendom had fallen from about her. With it had vanished that aura of "the" Lucy Joy, the second Mary Pickford, the star, and the rest of it. That glamour girl had gone.

Here in her place stood a figure how small and wispy against the aisle of tall, brown pine trunks, dressed in a typical little-girl frock of chintz, blue and white as the glimpses of spring sky be-

yond the high boughs. With that bodice cut so straight and childish, that quaint skirt flapping about slim calves, that shock of pale-gilt hair lifted by the breeze, she might have been nine instead of—what was she? Nineteen. Only just out of the schoolroom, anyhow. No artist, either. An ordinary, pretty little girl of the new-poor class who by a sheer stroke of luck had become a celebrity in her tinsel fashion. "Just an ordinary little girl," was her knell in Archie's heart. He had to be quite sure of something, though.

Gently he said, "I say, you left something at our camp on Friday night."

"Did I?" Unmistakably conscious, the birdlike voice.

He looked at her. No mistaking it. She knew.

He took it out of his pocket, the little, pitiful, gay favor.

"Oh," said Lucy Joy, looking at it. "Yes, that's mine—"

No hope, then, that it might have been mummie's or auntie's, might have got in there by mistake. Her doing.

Shy and flushed, she glanced up at him—yes, expectantly. She was expecting him to say, "Lucy!" in the tone in which he'd muttered it a couple of nights ago.

Helpless, the young man said nothing. Just an ordinary little girl in a blue frock who would have been keen on his getting fond of her. Why did they? Why?

Bewilderment, incredulity, dread, swept in swift waves over the face of the girl.

"Hush, hush," whispered the pines. "Hush—" He had nothing to tell her.

Still battling against the truth of it, the poor mite told herself he "dared not—just because of her being Lucy Joy," and made her puny effort against fate.

She tilted her chin, forced herself

to smile regally, and said, "You may keep it."

"What?" blurted out Archie in consternation.

"My handkerchief. You may keep it, if you like. As a sort of mascot, a souvenir, you know; to remember—"

Her voice trailed away at sight of the look on Archie Laverock's face.

He said blankly, "Oh, thanks very much," and stuffed the thing back into his pocket.

Alone the Power that made them both could have told which was the more wretched at that moment, the girl or the boy.

It is a pity Dante did not describe afternoon tea in purgatory. Quotations from this are needed to convey that meal of Archie's in the Joys' flower garden, where the finches twittered about the bird bath and the family was unwontedly silent, only the eyes of mummie and of auntie urging: "What is the matter? What has gone wrong? What, what is it?"

He left as soon as he decently might. Next day he was due to go down to Wales, he told them. This was his good-by. His face as he said it should have made even mummie feel positively sorry for the young man.

And what of the girl?

Upstairs to her room at the blue bungalow fled Lucy Joy as soon as he was gone. With a gesture such as she never again could achieve for the camera, she flung herself down, half against her pillows, half against the soft shoulder of her mother, and sobbed for one impossibility on which she had set her heart. Copiously she wept, but sincerely. The girl, for the first time miserable as a woman, meant every broken word that was received with such anguished sympathy by the two who, loving her, could do nothing for their darling.

"Mummie! Auntie! I cared for

him! I cared, mummie! I thought he did. I was sure he did! He was s—s—so d—different the other night, auntie——”

“They always are,” murmured Mrs. Harrison brokenly from her pitch on the rug beside the bed. “He was one of those. They don’t seem to be able to help it. They let you get so near them. Then they’re off! Then, well, I don’t believe they’re ever really very happy themselves.”

“I hope he’ll be miserable as long as he lives,” declared Mrs. Joy through small set teeth. “Brute! Brute to my child!”

Her child sobbed: “What’s so cruel is that I never did care for anybody before, mummie! I was p—p—perfectly happy because I didn’t know what happiness was! Oh, I’d know now!” The small, warm, tear-drenched creature writhed in her mother’s arms. “It’s him!”

“Lu, darling! ‘They’ never make good hus——”

“Who w—w—wants a good husband? I’ve heard you say it yourself, auntie! Only, b—before I met him I thought I was having such a lovely time, with my career, and going everywhere. Sir John sending peaches and orch—orchids! And the admiral around all the time!”

She blew her minute nose before wailing poignantly: “I should have said ‘Yes’ to the admiral if I hadn’t met him! I—I liked the admiral! And he’d have had you to live with me at Treillage Court, mummie——”

“My baby——”

“And Frankie he’d have helped to get on! And I didn’t think I’d noticed the baldness and fat! I thought men were so much kinder when they weren’t young! Oh! So they are,” mourned Lucy, hoarse with crying. “So they are. It doesn’t make any difference. though. Something’s made me feel I

couldn’t pup—pup—possibly marry the admiral now, auntie!”

Mrs. Harrison thought: “Then there’s something saved out of the fire. That young scamp has done one bit of good in his life at all events. Thank God, the child will never put up with anything less than the real thing!”

“Hush, hush,” whispered the pines outside the window. Mrs. Joy and Mrs. Harrison said nothing.

They had never been considered clever or even sensible women. They were, however, wise enough for one thing. They knew what must come. Not next month, perhaps, nor the month after, but not too long hence. Already it was decreed which stranger was to console this heartbroken child for the defection of her first love.

That unknown young man was somewhere in the world at that moment. At that moment he was engaged in some everyday act of his life; hunting for his collar stud, maybe, or stuffing his special mixture down into his pipe, or bending his head to sniff at the spray of syringa which some girl was even then fastening into the buttonhole of his Norfolk jacket.

Whoever he was, whatever he was doing, however far away, one thing was certain: time was bringing him nearer with every tick of the watch on Lucy’s bracelet.

This mummie and auntie knew; knew, also, that it was no use saying a word about him yet. Let the child have her cry out over her arrant rover, who, the wretch, was packing up, no doubt, for fresh fields and pastures new.

CHAPTER VII.

Archie Laverock, for the first three days he spent in Wales, was bored beyond sobs.

He had, as have all vividly enjoying and receptive natures, an immense capacity for being bored.

Rain had met him with a cool slap in the face as he crossed the Welsh border. Rain had been his portion in this place ever since. Soft, persistent breezes, blowing in from the coast, bore on their wings cloud after cloud of wet that, moving up to follow the course of the river, formed a procession of slow specters, gray clad and diaphanous, familiar enough to any Welsh valley dweller. Slate-gray mist shut out any glimpse of the mountains; the woods below them were smothered in what appeared to be drifts of soaking cotton wool. On the sodden, green common, just outside the village, where the rover had pitched his abode, the rain had made pools which spread, bright and ever-widening, above the mossy turf, around the boulders dark with wet, around the airplane wheels of his dwelling.

Airplane wheels? Dwelling? What dwelling, and why wheels?

Because his present quarters were the home most suitable of all to Archie and his type. It's name, though not painted on the frontdoor, was *The Naverac*, which is a very special sort of caravan.

May I describe it?

On the two pairs of these wheels, shock absorbers and all, a chassis is fixed. From the chassis rises the caravan, with its body of three-ply wood painted aluminum-gray, its surprisingly large windows curtained in green casement cloth, its ventilators, its pullman roof. You mount by a short ladder of which the sides are airplane struts, for, wherever possible, this roving home has been constructed out of war material. You can draw your staircase in after you; and inside those walls, gleaming white as the inner lid of a new water-color box, everything is compactness and comfort—the couch, which you can turn up against the farther end to make room for the bridge table for four; the delightful little kitchen range, as built for showmen of circuses; the tiny elec-

tric light with its own plant; the cupboard room any housewife would envy; the clock set into the wall above the door; the small-model phonograph; the generously proportioned kettle; the cocktail shaker; there lacks nothing here after which the soul of man—and of woman if the truth were known—has not yearned in dreams of an ideal existence.

Comfortable bed, board, and roof, but not, oh, not tied down forever in the same spot, among the same people! Fresh country, if one pleases, all around one every day! And fresh faces! The gypsy's life; open air and movement, plus luxuries of cleanliness which to the twentieth century are necessity! This, for the present, was the life of Archie Laverock.

Better even than being forever on the road in cars, for then he had always to return at night, to the old address of his camp. *The Naverac* knew no address. Before he was tired of one pitch he was off to another. Always on the road to somewhere else! Woodlands, commons, streams, flat country, hilly districts—Archie had sampled them all in a day. Tired of the leafy valley, he could turn to the mountain lane slotted like a ribbon in between rock and heath. Even if his map showed him that a road led to nowhere in particular, he could try it just the same. For, untrammelled as he was, his vagrancy had a purpose.

He was testing for that firm of his, under all reasonable conditions, the newly designed coupling which linked *The Naverac* to the small tractor car in front of it. And the reason that this caravan now rested near this God-forsaken puddle of a Welsh village was the other job, the mission which he had described to Lucy Joy that evening not so long ago, but seemingly ages since, at the camp. This village was the nearest known place to Rhôs, an old, white house buried rather than built behind

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woods a mile away. At Rhôs lived the old gentleman—Mr. Rice-Mathews his name was—who was so rich, and a connection of marriage with the firm, and who had sent for "their best young man", to teach him, in his old age, how to drive a motor car.

On the arrival of *The Naverac* at the common, a child brought him a note down from Rhôs. It regretted that Mr. Rice-Mathews was to be kept in bed by doctor's orders for a couple of days, and added that he would let Mr. Laverock know as soon as he was about again and ready for his lesson. The note was in a feminine hand, a nurse's, probably, signed, "Per pro E. Rice-Mathews, M. R. M."

Rather casual, thought Mr. Laverock.

Anyhow, it was raining too hard to give anybody a driving lesson.

It went on raining.

Archie Laverock made up the fire in the little circus range, got up what he called "quite a cheerful fug" inside his abode, lighted his pipe, and took up a book.

Within forty-eight hours, during which it rained without ceasing, he had read right through the only three novels with which the caravan bookshelf had been provided by its owner, another partner in Archie's firm. There was "Aylwin," all about how lovely Wales was in summer, just fancy; "Pointed Roofs," what this was about he never fathomed; and one of those volumes about "Sylvia Scarlett."

Laverock wished that the fellow who wrote these would realize how, after a certain time, one got *sick* of the name of a young woman, always the same young woman.

It rained on.

He came to an end of all the pipe tobacco and all the cigarettes he had brought with him. He put on his old trench coat, splashed forth to the village, and renewed his stock. The old lady who kept the corner shop knew

no English beyond the words, "It's raining! It's very raining!" Archie thought she had learned the greeting most frequently apt. For still it rained.

He took a tramp in the opposite direction, along four miles of ill-kept, up-hill road, bordered by stone hedges and sloping mountain field that faded off into the inevitable slate-gray mist; he passed one white cottage, met two children with sacks over their heads, and several drenched hens. What a neighborhood!

Through this deluge he returned to that ark *The Naverac*. No use pushing on anywhere, as at any moment this Mr. Rice-Mathews might summon him up to Rhôs.

Absolutely nothing to look at out of the caravan windows. He looked round inside, but he knew every neat detail of that interior by heart. Perhaps it was then, in intervals of "Aylwin," "Pointed Roofs," and making up the fire that he began looking, in a kind of odd, wondering, detached way, at himself.

Why was he never satisfied? With his luck?

He was lucky; yes, he always had been lucky. Lucky at school, always got on well there. Lucky in his guardian, his dead mother's brother, who had, during his lifetime, allowed him plenty of pocket money and had given him more or less the run of the place in the holidays. Lucky during the war, by Jove, yes! Lucky to come through as he had, looking at some of the places he'd been in. Lucky in his job with that firm; a job in a million, really, and one that suited him down to the ground. Lucky in being chosen to bring *The Naverac* down here, if only it would stop raining. Lucky, that was, in his friends—the son of the firm, the campites, all of them. Lucky in everything, really, except, of course, cards. Ah! There Laverock's extraordinary runs of bad luck were a positive byword.

Everybody chipped him about the kind of hands he got; said it must mean that he was jolly lucky in love.

But was he?

It seemed to young Laverock, at that moment, that young Laverock had always been, if anything, indifferent to women.

Only at the bottom of his heart Archie had sometimes the queerest feeling, one that persisted. The feeling that somewhere in the world there was a *woman waiting*. Not a woman he knew, at all. Some girl, different—ah, how different from any he had ever met! Was somewhere, fond of him, dreaming of him constantly, of him, Archie Laverock! Surrounding him with thoughts of tenderness which took the form of great, soft, dove-colored wings folded all about him!

The wildest fancy, of course; quite absurd.

What he really wanted was somebody to talk to in this dashed caravan.

He wished to goodness he could have brought old Smith along with him on this trip, but old Smith had business connected with sitting for hours in the immense anterooms of the India Office.

He wished he'd got a dog. He hardly realized what depths of boredom this admitted. Dog worshipers have said, "If he could only speak!" Archie rather imagined that if some of these adored animals did break into human speech, there would probably be heard the whining complaints of a selfish, overindulged child or the edged snap of a jealous mistress. But dogs never do speak. Thus there is put into their mouths only the phrase that the adoring, idealizing master wishes could be voiced. Illusion lives.

Yes, Archie thought he'd have to see about getting a dog.

A bull terrier was the breed he fancied; white, with shapely flanks and pointed ears. People say they're so deaf. He wondered.

As he did so, he rose to thrust a bit of coal between the bars of the range, and he glanced again out of the window above the door.

There, suddenly, framed by that window and set against that ground of drowned purple, drenched gray, and weeping green, there approached in the rainscape a half oval of fresh color. Taken merely as color, it was pleasant enough, a vivid and glowing rose; deeper than pink, paler than scarlet. Taken for what it signified, health and youth, it was equally agreeable. It was the flush, driven by rain and exercise into the face of a girl.

"Mr. Laverock?" inquired the voice of this girl from the steps of the caravan.

Archie tucked his pipe into his pocket and opened the door.

"I am Laverock," he said. "Won't you—"

"No, thanks. I won't come in." There cut him short the very business-like voice of the girl with her foot on the lowest step.

He saw that she was very tall and slim, dressed in a long, brown oilskin with an oilskin cap pulled down over her dark eyes and dripping onto her shoulders. Of her face little was to be seen but that flush of live carnation between wet, gleaming cap and coat. She might have been twenty-three, but her voice was the voice of a woman older than her years, a woman accustomed to give orders; cool, dominant, detached. Especially detached. No flicker of interest did she display in the supercaravan, object of poignant interest all along the London-Shrewsbury road, none in its inhabitant.

She said next a surprising thing:

"I have come to apologize to you."

Young Laverock, standing just above her, framed by the caravan door, looked down bewildered.

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I should have said, 'I was sent' to apologize."

"But——" began the young man.

The young woman, however, was of those who do not allow the sentences of others to be finished.

"I came from Mr. Rice-Mathews," she explained brusquely. "He's my grandfather, you know. He meant you to be asked up to dinner the day you arrived here. But—well, I stopped your coming."

Laverock, at the door, gazed down upon this forbidding girl in oilskin, backed by the downpour. "You stopped my coming? But you hadn't even seen me!" he exclaimed. "What had I done? Why should you——"

"It wasn't anything you'd done. It was just anybody, not you," the girl explained quickly. "You see, my grandfather is really very delicate. He simply has to be kept quiet sometimes, though he doesn't like it. There's only me to look after him now, you see. I think he's all right to-day. And he was annoyed with me for having put you off. So I told him I'd make my apologies."

"Oh, please don't," Archie began, smiling. "It's absolutely——"

But again she broke in, in that cool, detached voice which evidently covered pique at having been sent, like a scolded child, upon this errand. "And will you please come up to Rhôs to-night instead? We dine at eight."

"Oh, thank you. How very good of you to come, and in all this wet. Please tell Mr. Rice-Mathews that I shall be delighted——"

"You know the house?" she took up brusquely. "It's the first lodge gate, white, on the left as you leave the village. Good afternoon." And before he could speak she stepped lightly off the ladder, swung away along the water course which had been a road, and was swallowed up in the mist.

"Well! No danger of any romance

starting in that quarter!" thought Archie as he dressed for dinner, slipping in studs that were a gift from, let us say, May, nineteen-fifteen, and hunting for silk socks, the last pair of that half a dozen bestowed upon him by a kind of adopted aunt. His silk braces he had actually bought himself, not caring for the very Burlington Arcade-looking pair sent upon his last birthday by somebody else.

"That young woman," he mused, "would never give out anything except what young Frankie Joy would call a 'beany snub.' Good skin, bad manner. Horrid bad manner she had. Anyhow, it'll be a change to have dinner in a house for once."

But as, at a quarter to eight, he approached the entrance to Rhôs, he found he wasn't to have dinner in a house, after all.

He caught sight of the gleaming dinner table, with lamps already rosily alight, set out on the wide veranda, of which he got glimpses between the rhododendron bushes of the ascending drive. It struck Archie as a beast of a drive. It was steep, it turned at a nasty angle, you couldn't get a fair run at it anywhere; he wondered how many cars stuck on it halfway to the top.

But at the top it ended in a broad, level sweep, bordered on one hand by an ocean of lawn and on the other by a giant oak guarding the long-gabled house, white as a chalk cliff in the gloomy dusk.

Archie Laverock, stopping to make sure which of many windows might be the entrance to this place, was greeted by the small but unmistakable sound of breaking glass.

At the same moment a voice, old and weak, yet somehow boyish, cried from a far corner of the veranda, "There goes the last one!"

A moment later a maid passed, carrying a basket which held a number of

empty medicine bottles; seeing Archie she paused, turned.

Mr. Rice-Mathews came forward out of the shadows.

He was the frailest-looking old gentleman imaginable, so small and slender he seemed bent over by the mere weight of seals at his waist. Hair fine as thistledown covered his head, and all the bone of his face showed through his delicately wrinkled skin. In that feeble but indomitable voice he greeted his guest.

"Ah, Mr. Laverock, isn't it? How do you do, how do you do? I am very glad to see you. I think my granddaughter"—her slim shape appeared behind his shoulder—"explained to you why we must have seemed so very rude? But you had a good run down from London? And did you find your way without difficulty to this house? Will you sit?—ah, dinner is in! Will you come here?"

They sat down at the oval table set on the wide flagstones between the French windows of the house and the outer, deepening gloom of the grounds. The light of the rosily shaded oil lamps fell upon glimpses of turf silvered with wet, upon those gleaming strings of rain which hung between the gazer and the landscape like a bead curtain, and upon the great arms of the oak, sleeved with moss, fringed with polypodium fern, which quivered under the still-falling downpour. Always the word "Wales" would bring back to the rover the smell of the wet moss, the sound of rain on foliage, the sight of ferns climbing high up on trees.

"No rain drives me indoors any more," boasted Archie's host presently. "For the last thirty years I have been kept in cotton wool, Mr. Laverock. In cotton wool. No fresh air, if they could help it. No fresh, cool wet. Hey? I hardly know why I tell you all this at once."

Archie Laverock, from his side of the

table, uttered small sounds which conveyed sympathy, respect, interest. He was "good at" this sort of thing, as his firm had known when they sent him down with orders to keep the old gentleman pleased with him and the firm. Besides, he was genuinely interested in this extraordinary little old man who smashed medicine bottles and yet looked as if a puff of night breeze would carry him away; who preferred to eat his excellent saddle of Welsh mutton and his wonderful peas to the sound of rain pattering on leaves, splashing in pools on the gravel just behind his chair.

The mutton, by the way, was exquisitely carved at table by the granddaughter.

"No, Laverock, even you have not been ministered unto by the charming sex as I have for the last thirty years," pursued the old man. "For just thirty years I have not been allowed to do anything. Not a thing. Kept as an invalid. Say a mummy. Of course, the excuse was"—he put his hand, the skeletonized claw of a sea bird, to the left of the old-fashioned dress waistcoat with silver buttons—"the excuse was that one would—er—snuff out—er—go 'west' in ten seconds if one did. Perhaps you'd prefer a whisky and soda? This is some of that old whisky, hey?" he added to the parlor maid. "Good. I haven't tasted whisky for thirty years, either. I'll join you in a peg." He blinked eyes muttonous as a child's. "Milk with barley water was my poison for thirty years. Wonderful, the care my wife took of me. She was a good woman. So was Mary. A good, good woman."

Young Laverock remembered that "Mary" was the granddaughter who married into the motor firm. Then he almost jumped in his chair.

For suddenly Mr. Rice-Mathews brought both hands down on the arms of his own chair and raised his voice

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In a tone which quivered with high and passionate resentment, the tone of indictment against a fate undeserved, the old man cried out:

"All my life I have been surrounded by these good women!"

Equally suddenly the voice dropped, adding with great gentleness, "Not you, Mauve." He turned to the girl, slim and silent, at his right hand. "I didn't mean you, my dear."

"I know you didn't, grandfather," the girl accepted his tribute.

Her voice was still as cool and detached as it had been on the caravan steps. Archie noticed, however, that there was a gleam of understanding in her glance as it rested on the old man. The minutes her eyes left him they became as hard as nails. His impression of the whole appearance of Miss Mauve Rice-Mathews was that the girl was well turned out without caring to be anything beyond this. Of that half-recognized aim to attract that shows all unconsciously through details of a frock, of a girl's shoe buckles, her hair slide, the polish of her nails, there was not an iota. She honestly did not care what any one thought of her looks. Her mind was not there. She was thinking of something else the whole time.

Was she sulking over that apology that she had been sent to make? How like a girl—some girls. But no, Laverock decided, not this girl.

He wondered if, and why, she was so "fed" with life. At her age.

Her grandfather was talking:

"Can't run, of course! I was never allowed to learn to swim. No opportunities here to fly. So I want at least to learn to drive a car. A bus, you'd call it? Or is a bus always an aeroplane?" Never was any one so pitifully eager to be up to date even in slang.

"I shall want you to tell me those things. In fact, you will have a great deal to do with my education, Laverock. Look upon yourself as a sort of private

tutor and upon me as—as a backward boy."

So, pathetically, he plied Archie with questions about himself and his own kind. All these young men of nowadays. What did they do? Think about? Want? Was it true that here, in this post-war generation, Archie's generation, the generation that tasted life as this old man yearned hopelessly to taste it now—was it true that here was a generation spoiled?

"I hope not, sir——"

"Materialistic! 'Completely mannerless,' they say. I don't think I'd agree," said the old man, watching, across the flowers and a gulf of fifty years, this youth's fine shoulders and tawny satin head. "I was—er—somewhat pleased with what one of these modern young women says:

"But since we are children of this age,

In curious ways discovering salvation,
I will not quit my muddled generation,
But ever plead for beauty in this rage!"

"Hey? Oh, yes. I—er—even read their verse. Do I not, Mauve? Keep up with it all. In the push. You'll find Miss May Sinclair and the last number of 'Pan' and Mrs. Hugh Walpole and Miss Ethel M. Dell and Doctor Marie Stopes on 'Married Love' all in my room, on the shelf where the medicine bottles used to be. Vastly clever, all they write. All the different kinds. To me, of course, there would appear to be a certain lack of style in some of their work. So different! But that, it appears, is intentional. You do not read much, Laverock? Really? You're only books—perhaps? Ha, ha, if it's not impertinent? But perhaps this age does not even quote Moore?"

So they talked, the old man who owned that Welsh country house, the stately routine of which could be seen by a guest in glimpses as the topography of a town is seen from a flying train, and the young man whose every earthly belonging was packed up in somebody

else's caravan. As for the girl, she might have been one of the veranda pillars as she sat there, with eyes held upon her peach. She was not shy. The few words she did utter were entirely self-possessed. An admirable manager, since she was the woman at the head of affairs at Rhôs. Everything perfect—the table, the food, the flowers, the lights, the cut glass, the ancient-crested silver, the training of the maids. A thoroughly efficient young woman, without charm.

"A cigar, Laverock," said the old man when his granddaughter rose and turned to the French windows of the drawing-room. "Leave it open, Mauve; you'll play to us when you've finished your coffee, will you not?"

"If you like. What would you like, grandfather?"

"Shall we let our guest choose this evening? What sort of music does Mr. Laverock care for?"

Before Archie could speak the girl's detached voice threw out: "Do you like revue tunes? A lot of new ones came down this morning."

"Can't you play any Beethoven?" suggested Archie. He wondered if he had caught in her tone a flick of light contempt for any taste that young men possess—a hint that any piffling jingle is good enough for them.

The old man took him up, pleased.

"Ah! We've that in common, hey? Good! Play the 'Moonlight Sonata,' Mauve. Obsolete, I feared. But since Laverock does not insist upon bolshe-

vik opera, let us have the 'Moonlight Sonata.' "

The stately opening chords rose above the silkily rustling obbligato of rain on leaves. She could play, that young woman, inside there, in the drawing-room. She could "make the piano talk," could make it cry aloud, complain, appeal, and sob.

Into that passionate sonata of Beethoven's, more than into any piece of music the heart of man has yet conceived, each of us reads his own meaning and interpretation.

To you or to me it may mean all the glamour of all the twilights that ever were, irradiated by the rising, slowly, slowly of the moon of the harvest of your wishes—or mine.

To this girl it meant—that? Young Laverock, listening, wondered. What her eyes and voice did not speak flowed now from her fingers. It was a clear and willing stream struck from a sudden rock.

Could there have been a more vivid contrast than that between her curt, matter of fact, "I have come to apologize" of this afternoon and her enchanted playing of this evening?

What was behind her music? What bridged the gulf between that and her seeming personality?

Was she not happy? Unhappy, then? Miserable? What? Archie Laverock was still wondering when he said good night.

He wondered about it all the wet way back to his caravan.

TO BE CONTINUED IN THE APRIL NUMBER.



ALMOST

I THINK that I could almost love you, dear,
But for some primal blundering of fate,
Some atom in my being gone astray,
Which leaves me cold who should be passionate.

LOUISE HEALD.

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The Lover at Large

By DuVernet Rabell

Author of "Degrees of Innocence,"
"The Return of Jimmy," etc.



WALKING down the path which led from the observatory on the hill, Professor Henderson fanned himself with his broad-brimmed hat with one hand and held in his other a photograph on which were some half a dozen incompleting circles against a dark background. So great was his absorption that he reached the foot of his own steps without knowing and stumbled on the lowest one.

His daughter, Ann, sitting in the swing, buried in a volume which looked too heavy for her slender hands to hold, flew to his rescue, and led him, blinking, up the steps. Having installed him in the rocker, she took the photograph from him and walked to the edge of the vine-screened porch, where she could get a better light on the picture.

"Um," said Ann. "The star trails are broken here and there, but I suppose that is because of clouds intervening." She put the picture between the leaves of her book. "Young Lacy does good work, doesn't he?" Then she added, with a shrug of irritability, "If he would only stop running around with those girls from the hotel at the foot of the lake, he would have something to show for his summer."

The professor pursed up his round button of a mouth which looked so utterly at variance with his heavy-lensed, scholarly spectacles. "Oh, well, Lacy is young, and youth seeks youth." He glanced rather timidly at his daughter. "I often wonder, Ann, that you don't show more inclination for the pleasure of youth. Now, those dances they have

on Saturday night; they seem very gay—you know how pretty the music sounds coming over the water—and I'm sure Tom Lacy would be glad to take you."

Ann shook her bobbed head impatiently. Ann didn't wear her hair bobbed because it was fashionable or a mark of brains; she wore it so because it was comfortable. This gives you a bit of a line on Ann.

"I don't want Tom Lacy to take me to those dances. I hate to dance, and the girls whisper about my clothes and the men say silly things to me."

"Silly things?" The professor was frankly curious. "What sort of things?"

"Well, one told me that I had lips like a half-opened rosebud and a voice as full of harmony as the wind among the willows. Don't you call that silly?"

The professor didn't say what he called it. Instead, he asked, "And what did you say?"

"I said," Ann replied concisely, "that the youth of the country was plainly going to seed—all length of limb and no gray matter—and that the next generation would probably be simple-minded."

"Ann! And then?"

Ann yawned. "There wasn't any then. I went home and he went in and danced with the Crosby girl—the one who wears a lizard embroidered on her stocking and puts perfume behind her ears."

The professor took off his glasses and blew on them. Then he forgot to

wipe them off, and put them back as they were, blinking at Ann through the mist.

"Of course," he began diffidently, "I don't pretend to be an authority on the ways of youth, but you know, Ann, you must marry some time, and it doesn't seem to me that you are exactly taking the way of bringing this about."

Ann frowned severely on her parent. "Father," she said with chill displeasure, "this is the first time you have ever spoken to me on this subject. And let it be the last. I don't like it. But while we are on it, I might as well tell you this: I do not intend to marry. I have other plans for myself. When you retire as director of the Flick Observatory I mean to take your place. I am studying to that end, fitting myself to carry on your work. There are many women capable of marrying and adding to the world's population, but very few capable of adding to its knowledge." And Ann arose and walked down the steps and up the path into the woods.

And I wish you could have seen Ann as she said this. She'd read the phrase somewhere, and she had fancied it mightily. She had read and reread it several times, until she had it by heart. Not only did the words make music to her, but she felt, having taken note of the thoughts which seemed lately to have been budding in the professor's mind, that they might come in handy one fine day. So now she recited them with a telling gesture, and then took her departure and let them simmer in her father's brain. And as I say, I wish you could have seen her when she said it. I am sure you would have smiled, smiled if you had been a woman, and laughed outright if you had been a man; laughed and then taken your way down the path along which Ann had flitted. You would have felt you owed it to your sex to teach Ann Henderson a thing or two.

She was so divinely, deliciously young. Her hair, bobbed as I mentioned, had none of the stiff, ugly angles of cut hair, but, instead, like the first hair of a child's, was smooth and softly silky on the crown, and all about her small, pink ears and at the nape of her neck it fluffed out in golden puffs, like little clouds when the sun is setting behind them. Velasquez would have loved to paint Ann's hair. And Ann would probably have called his Latin enthusiasm for its beauty "silly." She didn't know any better.

She could glibly discuss Orion, the spectrum analysis of Aldebaran, the rings and satellites of Saturn, she knew the fixed stars and the "wanderers," the position of the former and the course of the latter. She could have explained, had you the courage to ask in the face of her patronizing air, the principal of the gnomon of Anaximander, and she was a shark at trigonometry—still she was woefully ignorant.

Fancy a girl of twenty-one, with a tiptilted mouth and seal-brown eyes with curling winkers, never having had a youth quote Byron's love letters to her or hum "Oh, Promise Me" in her ear as they waltzed to "La Salome," with the tom-tom or the drum or whatever it is beating time to their hearts, or never having heard a man's voice grow husky or felt his hands shake as they clasped hers when he said good night to her in the moonlight! Oh, yes, Ann had missed a lot!

But she was bound to learn. She couldn't escape. Youth, love, and the springtime are the very efficient faculty of the University of Life, and Ann was going to matriculate just one hour after she stated to her father her life's ambition and her views on matrimony.

Ann, having indicated to her parent where she stood in the manner so typical of American offspring, dismissed the matter from her mind and busied herself with other thoughts.

To this end she seated herself on a fallen log in a little clearing which she called hers in the woods. It was a delightful spot, surrounded by flowering shrubs and shady with overhanging willows, and kept from being lonely by a chatty little brook which took its way about the tree trunks.

Ann was roused by the sound of a voice in the path behind her. And when finally she took note of the voice she had the vague impression that it had been going on for some time, only her own mental meandering prevented her from becoming really conscious of it before, taking actual note of the words. She turned her head over her shoulder and wondered how long it would be before the person who was speaking would be passing on. For a moment she listened, and then straightened slowly.

Why—why this was most embarrassing; she ought to do something—something right away! No man would go on talking in the vein in which this man was talking did he suspect there was a third person listening. But what should she do—cough—move? She tried both with no result. Then she rose, then she sat down. No—no, she couldn't go out there, interrupt, burst in on a scene like that! What an awful, painful thing it would be for the girl, for the man, to find that their tender drama had included an audience. How it would—would cheapen it. No; best stay where she was, try not to listen. Maybe she had better put her fingers in her ears. But that was silly. After all, this was her own particular nook, and, at first with acute discomfort, then with flush-cheeked embarrassment, and finally with glowing eyes and parted lips, Ann Henderson listened to some man with a soft, deep voice and a great command of a lover's vocabulary, making love to a girl on the other side of the wild-rose bushes.

"I have always believed," the man

was saying, "that love was a slight, rather foolish emotion, light and passing for a man. But I am being punished now—now since I have loved you. Can't you care, *adorata mio*?" There was a sound of brushed branches, as if he moved suddenly. "Oh, love me a little or let me go!"

Ann, quite forgetting the shame of eavesdropping, waited breathlessly for the girl's reply. But it came in too low a tone for her ears to catch.

"No, I will not forget you," the man went on. "I can never escape your memory. It is woven about all the beautiful things in the world—the scent of roses, the sound of running water, the sky just after dawn. Nothing will ever be the same to me again. My mountains will be barriers that keep me from you; my rivers will say your name over and over again just to tantalize me; the stars that formerly I loved to look at, dream under, will only remind me of your hair with their radiance behind it."

Ann started. Stars—oh, yes, stars. Here was a new use for them, a new slant, so to speak, on the celestial beings of the heavens. Men used them in love-making. She knew the stars, but never had she heard them thus spoken of.

There was a long silence. Then another movement, and the man's voice deepened, shook, when he spoke:

"You have made me happy in your brief moods of kindness, and yet—yet do you know, I am half afraid of love—afraid of what it has done to me? Why, sometimes, when I hold you in my arms, when I touch your white throat, a desire sweeps over me to close my hands about it, to clasp it tight—tighter; then I don't know whether I love you or hate you. Does it matter, I wonder?" There was the sound of a short, grim laugh. "Man has not progressed so far along the path of civilization—the soul of the beast——"

Ann flew to the other side of the

clearing, her hands pressed tight over her ears. She flung herself face down beside the brook, half sobbing. This was too much; she could not listen any more. It was—why, it was almost sacrilege to intrude on a scene like this.

Then, presently, her face cooling, the beat of her heart quieting, she fell to wondering about the girl. How could she have kept her voice so low, so repressed, so controlled? Surely in the presence of such a love, such a lover— But perhaps she was one of these vampire women with whom the earth seemed overrun. Ann knew very little of this type. She had read but few best sellers, and she rarely attended the movies, but now she found herself calculating on this species. How did they look? What were they like? Did men always love them? And in the course of her reflections she thought how unfortunate it was that such a man, a man capable of such deep, sincere feeling, should become enmeshed in the toils of such a woman, supposing the woman to be of the take-all-and-give-nothing variety.

Presently she cautiously took her hands down from her ears. Everything was silent with the noonday hush which falls in the woods.

She rose and walked slowly home.

At luncheon she electrified her father by this speech:

"You know, father, I think that women are, as a rule, imperfectly balanced. To come to the fullest development of which they are capable, they should have experience along all lines, emotional as well as mental."

The professor, his napkin suspended midway between the table and his lips, stared at her.

"Yes," Ann nodded, looking gravely into the depths of her melon, "no woman should shut herself away from love." She glanced at her father and then apparently decided to be frank.

She told him of her morning's experience.

"It was like listening to 'Tristan and Isolde,'" she finished. She rose, flushing, her eyes lowered. "It made me feel very queer."

The professor found himself quite intrigued with this new viewpoint of his daughter's. He planned to retire to his study directly after luncheon and give it an hour's concentrated thought.

But just as he rose from the table, the maid brought him a note. As he read it he frowned.

Eric Boldt? Eric Boldt? Now, who in the world was he? He cudged his short memory and then recollected. Yes. Why, certainly, Eric Boldt. He was the young writer of Canadian-trapper tales he had met two years before up on Wild Horse River. And he had cordially invited Boldt to visit him should he ever come East. He remembered perfectly. And now Boldt was coming. He peered at the date on the note. Yes, he was coming that very night. Dear, dear, he must tell Ann. They must make some preparation.

A little after six that evening, Ann, in a middy blouse and short, pleated skirt, white silk stockings, and black patent-leather slippers, low-heeled, with straps like the very little boys wear to dancing school, walked out onto the porch where Eric Boldt was sitting waiting for dinner. The professor was nowhere about. Like so many clever men, he did his best work while his dinner was cooling and the cook ramping in the kitchen.

Eric Boldt was a son of Anak, with frank eyes and a smile of easy amiability. He rose and looked down at Ann, his keen eyes flashing from her shiny shoes to the smooth crown of her head.

"How do you do," Ann was saying. "You're Eric Boldt, aren't you? Father should be here to properly present us, but father is never about when he should be."

Eric made no comment on this failing of the professor's; possibly, having lived much of his life away from civilization, he had lost the trick of talking when he had nothing to say.

But presently he agreed with a comment Ann made on the weather, and she sat down suddenly.

Eric Boldt was the man whose love scene she had intruded upon that morning! She recognized his voice, the singular, vibrant, flexible quality of it, before he had spoken three words.

In a moment she had regained her poise, only now the eyes with which she looked at Eric had a new look in them. It was less impersonal, more curious, more interested.

She went on to talk about the sunset and the view down the lake with the twilight shadows lengthening on its surface, and Eric observed that he had had no idea that the sunsets in the East were so fine. Then she suggested a cocktail and excused herself to make it, saying that her father always left something out. As she passed down the hall she took the occasion to rap sharply and reprovingly on the door of the professor's study, and when she returned with the frosty shaker in her hand, she found him discoursing volubly, if somewhat apologetically, on the comparative rarity of the atmosphere of Mt. Washington and Mt. McKinley.

He talked all through dinner, but afterward, thinking he had entirely fulfilled his duties as a host, he turned Eric over to Ann and retired to his study.

Ann had an unhappy evening. She found she could think of so little to talk about. She pointed out the observatory, told him something of the work being done there, and when the strains of the "Twinkle-toe Trot" were wafted down the lake to them, she asked him if he were fond of music. And he answered that he was, if it had a tune. Then there was another break in the

conversation. But Eric didn't seem to mind. He lounged back in his chair and blew smoke rings.

As she went upstairs to bed, Ann told herself that doubtless he had been bored to death. Still, he had laughed once or twice and— But what did it matter? Why should she worry as to whether or not she has successfully entertained a man who was mad about some siren woman, a woman who probably wore jade earrings and carried a Pekingese under her arm.

But the next morning, when Ann heard Eric tell her father that he had enjoyed a very nice evening, and that he'd like to avail himself of the professor's invitation to stay a day or so if it would be all right, she was pleased. He added that young, pretty girls like Miss Henderson were a treat to him.

Ann quite forgot to shrug and dub this as "silly" and ordered pop-overs for luncheon, and went upstairs and tied a blue ribbon on her hair.

Eric Boldt stayed five days, and by the evening of the third Ann found herself in a very upset state of mind.

The morning after his arrival they had gone through the observatory, the professor doing all the talking, Ann merely tagging along. In the afternoon Ann had taken him canoeing, and he had sung old Canadian boat songs, handed down by the *couriers du bois*, those intrepid souls who had paddled Father Hennepin on his first voyage down the Mississippi. They came home just in time to dress for dinner, and, for the first time in her life, Ann really dressed. And then called herself an unkind name and went back to her white-silk middy.

That evening Eric, after a timid question or two from Ann, began to talk about himself, his work, and where it had taken him, and Ann found herself wondering what had ever attracted a man who spoke of the outdoors with such a thrill in his voice to the siren

woman—by now she was fully convinced that she was a siren woman—who probably hated that sort of thing. Men were queer.

The next night they danced, after Eric had carefully inspected the victrola records for a waltz he liked. And Ann found she didn't hate dancing at all; the only part she hated was stopping.

When finally they did stop and went out on the porch to drink lemonade and risk pneumonia, Ann found that she was regarding herself with very unfavorable eyes. She wished she was beautiful, she wished she had charm; in short, she bitterly envied the siren woman for the gifts she had, which Ann fancied had been denied her.

Eric seated himself on the veranda rail and gazed up at the stars.

"I love to look up at the millions and millions over my head," he said; "they are such company."

A quick glow warmed Ann's heart. Here at last she could shine; here she was on her own ground.

"You know," she told Eric, smiling, "you can't see a million stars."

Eric, who thought he knew his heavens pretty well, turned. "Of course I can. Why, there are millions and millions of stars—"

"Oh, yes," Ann agreed, "with the telescope in the observatory, in which the object glass is far superior to any other in the country, we can see one hundred million stars, and by means of photography uncounted millions more are shown. No one can guess where this stupendous array ceases. But, you know, we can't see them—no human eyes, from any position or at any time, can see more than two thousand." She settled back and smiled at him with certain wistful expectancy.

Ann wasn't showing off, that is, with any idea of being smarty-smarty. No. Just as another girl who has been instructed by an enterprising mamma as

to the perfect line from her throat to her chin lifts her head the more properly to display it, or another young thing whose hands are like white butterflies flutters them with artless art when she talks, so did Ann seek to display what seemed her most valuable asset for the interest and pleasure of a man she favored. Why not? She was young, it was spring, and Nature had seemingly taken sudden thought of this young daughter of hers, thinking, without doubt, that it was high time she was about the purpose for which she had been created.

But Ann's knowledge of the heavens did not appear to impress Eric as she thought, hoped it might.

Instead, he looked at her with that faintly alarmed, tolerant, half-disapproving expression a man always assumes when he becomes aware for the first time that besides the dimple in her chin and a kissable spot near her left temple, a girl possesses brains.

He laughed. "For Heaven's sake, where did you pick that up?"

"Pick it up?" Ann looked at him, her eyes faintly troubled. "Why the science of astronomy—"

Eric didn't let her finish. "Yes, I know," he said; "I dare say you have been brought up on it." Then he leaned forward and laughed with sudden audacity down into her eyes. "But don't let's talk about any science now—the moon is rising, and I smell roses."

Here it came to Ann that a man who had begged another woman to "love him a little or let him go" but three short days ago should not now be talking of roses and moonlight to her.

She endeavored to guide the conversation into other channels, but with little success. So presently she arose and said that her father did not like her to stay up after eleven; it affected her studies the next day.

Which, considering the fact that the professor was wont to get her out of

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bed at all hours to observe this or that celestial phenomenon, was rather funny.

That night just as she slipped out of her frock it came to Ann. She was in love. It was not a question of she might be or she was going to be—she was. Having faced this fact squarely, with wide eyes and slightly shortened breath, Ann crept into bed and cried herself to sleep, as we do in those halcyon days when we are young and in love and exaltantly miserable.

All the next day Ann kept out of Eric's way, but in that magic just-before-the-sunset hour he cornered her at the boathouse.

He stood for a moment looking at her, and then crossed in two strides the intervening space between them.

He took the paddle from her hands, placed them about his neck, slipped his arms about her, and drew her close. Then he kissed her.

And to Ann it seemed as if the world had gone whirling on, leaving her alone with Eric; it was as if they stood on a desert island, earth's sole inhabitants.

For a long moment they stood there quite without speaking. But Ann didn't mind this lack of words.

After all, youth is not much for words at times like these. Their emotions, new, surging, awe-inspiring, have no need of speech to awaken them into being. It is only when we grow older, when contact with the world has blunted our sensibilities, that we demand fine phrases in a love scene. The glow, the glory, is not then so near the surface; they require words, passionate protestations, fervent avowals, to charm them forth.

Presently the circling earth returned in its orbit and picked them up. Eric released her. Then he laughed, a low, excited laugh, his eyes shining down into hers.

"Come on," he said; "lets go and tell your father we are engaged."

Ann started. Did it happen this

way? Was there nothing more? A man just kissed a girl and they became betrothed? It was quite simple, really wonderful—

Then, as she was walking down the path, her hand in Eric's, a door in her brain opened and the other woman stepped forth.

Eric had evidently forgotten her existence. But she could not. Some mention must be made of her now. They had reached the steps, and she stopped. She opened her lips, but the words would not come. She had never before found herself in such a predicament. Perhaps if she waited—maybe later it would be easier; she would have had more time to think, to formulate some idea of what she meant to say. Or Eric might tell her. So she put aside her impulse to speak, and followed Eric up the steps and into the living room.

The professor, being an unworldly soul, did not take into account the brevity of his daughter's acquaintance with Eric Boldt, and he had seemingly forgotten Ann's statement, made no more than five days ago, that she never intended to marry. He just beamed and ordered up some special Benedictine from the cellar and drank every one's health all around.

All during the dinner Ann was rather silent, and afterward, when Eric suggested they go for a walk, her mind was quite made up.

"I'll take you down my own particular path to my own particular glade in the woods," she offered, "and show you where Queen Titania holds her court at the full of the moon."

She had decided that she wanted to make the telling of what Eric must tell her as easy for him as she could, and she decided that in the spot of this, his scene with the other woman, he could speak with less difficulty.

She didn't ask confession out of curiosity, nor did she exactly feel that it was something he owed her. Rather, it

was what he owed himself, his future peace of mind. Just as, she argued naïvely, when she was a little girl and had been naughty, complete happiness did not return to her soul until after confession.

They reached the open glade and sat down on a stone at the edge of the brook.

Eric smiled down at her, pressing her fingers to his lips. "I can hardly realize that you are going to marry me."

Now, Ann had not had much worldly experience, but she knew that men, decent men, do not ask one girl to marry them when they are entangled in the meshes of another.

"Eric," she asked timidly, her fear threatening to slip eel-like from the clutch of her firm resolve, "have you ever cared—has there ever been any other girl—woman—"

Eric stopped this right here. "Now, dearest, that road leads nowhere. I don't believe in confessionals at this time. They bring back a lot that a man wants to forget and fill a girl's head with things that she can't understand, that she's not supposed to understand. I have never before cared for the right kind of a girl in the right kind of a way. You'll have to let it go at that."

"I only—I just wanted to make sure there was no reason——" She stopped twisting her hands nervously together. "I don't want to pry into your past at all."

Eric lifted her chin until her eyes met his. "Dear, there is no past. It ceased to be from the moment I met you."

Then he kissed her, and again Ann had the feeling of the earth's passing on and leaving them alone together in the infinite where nothing mattered.

Before she went to sleep that night she straightened it all out in her mind. Eric Boldt might have cared for this other woman—her soul winced, but she went bravely on—but he had said his

past was dead from the moment he met her, and love mothered the desire to believe the entire truth of this. After all, and this was reasonable enough, she had not heard the finish of this scene in the woods. Doubtless Eric and the siren, who for a brief time had enmeshed him in her toils, had parted forever.

The next morning Eric received a bulky letter which made him scowl into his coffee cup, and directly after breakfast he went off, alone, and didn't return all day.

"Business," he explained briefly to Ann, who had asked no questions, but whose mind was active.

But by evening she had stilled these queries, had laughed at the fears that would spring up from time to time all day, and went for a paddle down the lake to tranquilize her mind.

She drew up under the willows and, clasping her hands under her head, fell to dreaming, not of the uniformity of the earth's rotation, not of the periodicity of sun spots.

Then the blow fell.

Again she was forced to play the eavesdropper, under the same conditions, and with Eric Boldt playing the stellar rôle. Only this time she didn't wait to hear as much. After the first startled, amazed, horror-stricken moment, she fled as before a storm of venom-tipped arrows.

But she could not avoid hearing this. And the echo of the words followed her up the lake, wrapping themselves tight about her heart, shutting off her breath, crushing out all the happiness that there was in the world.

"Meeting you has been as if I had suddenly become aware of a new, a beautiful world, a world of vivid sky, green trees, and a silver road running over the hills to fairyland."

A silence, while a bird twittered sweetly and some one in the bungalow

above began to play Schubert's "Serenade."

"Don't turn away, heart's desire! I love your eyes. They are like limpid pools that hold the early morning sky."

Paddling rapidly over the water, Ann wanted her father. No, she didn't want her father at all. She wanted her mother, the mother she couldn't even remember, but whose arms she now needed more than anything else in the world.

Then the thought recurring of Eric's tender voice as he made love to this newest fancy dried her tears, and it was a young fury who, some ten minutes later, swept into her father's study.

For five minutes she talked dramatically, with many gestures.

"I see my mistake now," she said. "I should have told you before that it was Eric I heard that morning in the woods. You would have made him explain. I couldn't. He brushed aside my questions, and, like a fool, I was willing to believe what he wanted me to believe. But what an imbecile I was! No man could talk to a woman as he talked to her and not be mad over her! Still, if it was some sort of intrigue—men do come to care and break off—" She stopped with slow-flaming eyes. "But this last affair—to-day he was talking to a girl—a young girl—a girl like me! A child could have told the difference. His voice, his word—everything!" She flung herself in her father's arms. "He's a regular Don Giovanni, a professional lover running about at large breaking g—girl's hearts!" She stamped her foot. "Why don't you say something? Aren't you going to do something about it?"

The professor tried to remove his glasses as he always did in moments of stress, but finding his hands otherwise occupied, he pursed up his button of a mouth instead.

"Yes, yes," he reassured Ann. "I'll—I'll speak to Eric."

"Speak to him!" Ann all but shrieked. "I want him boiled in oil!"

Then she rushed out of the room and flew to the sanctuary of her own room, where she tried to suffocate herself in the pillows.

An hour later some one knocked on her door. She didn't answer, and the knocking continued.

"Ann," her father ordered in what he doubtless imagined was a firm tone of voice, "I want you to open this door."

Ann merely choked on a fresh sob and buried her face deeper.

Then she heard another voice, a voice that made her mechanically sit up, straighten her hair, and pull down her skirts.

"Look out, professor," the other voice was saying, and there was no note of repentance in it, either—only anger and much exasperation. "I'm going to force the door."

Ann watched with fascinated eyes while the paneling of her door gave way and Eric Boldt, with her father trotting at his heels, strode into the room.

He sat down on the edge of the bed and scowled at her.

"Why in Heaven's name," he demanded, "will you women beat about the bush when you want to know something? Why don't you come right out and ask a man—give him a chance?"

Ann, remembering that she was the aggrieved party, flung him a barricaded look, and moved over a foot on the bed.

"Now you listen to your father," Eric went on. "Tell her," he commanded, turning to the professor.

The professor, startled at the task allotted him, coughed nervously, but bravely took up his task.

"It's his writing, you know, my dear," he began. "It seems that his publishers want more love interest—love interest is the word?" and he turned questioningly to Eric, who nodded blackly.

"And Eric's love scenes have never been successful, you know," he broke off suddenly. "I remember now that I felt this in the one or two books I've read of yours. They were too booky, too—yes, yes, I'm going right on. Well, it seems he has a new method now. He goes off by himself and talks out his love scenes."

Here Ann's expression changed as under a wand.

"This morning he received a letter from his publishers, asking that a scene be rewritten, and when you heard Eric making love to some one this evening you heard him making love to the heroine of the 'Black Trapper.'"

"And if you had come right out in the open the other night, we could have avoided this," Eric added sternly, although his mouth was twitching into a smile.

Ann said nothing. A thousand stars had fallen into her lap, and their glory was choking her.

Presently she joined Eric on the porch below. He gave her a preliminary shake, and then he kissed her.

"To think I almost lost you," he murmured against her hair. "Oh, Ann, do you know I'm so crazy about you? Let's not risk anything happening—when a man cares for a girl—" He stopped, moving his head impatiently. "Oh, I can't tell you how much I care! I'm a duffer at love scenes. It's bad enough to write them, but when you *feel* them! I'm doing this badly, but you *know*."

"Yes," Ann agreed, settling herself more comfortably in the curve of his arm, "I dare say you do do it badly. But go on. My taste is uncultivated. I like it."



CONFESSION

MY little house is full of you,
Who ne'er stepped through its door.
My thoughts of you have hung the walls,
And carpeted the floor.

The sense of you is in the rooms,
Like clover on the air;
You are always in the other room,
Or going up the stair.

I play at hide-and-seek all day,
Content to feel you near;
With night, I put all games away,
Oh, I am lonely, dear!

ABBIE HUSTON EVANS.



The Family Tradition

By Katharine Haviland Taylor

Author of "Barbara of Baltimore,"

"Yellow Soap," etc.

PART TWO.

CHAPTER VIII.

DAVID STODDARD had always avoided people of aimless existence, the prodigals of time. He believed that soft living softened ambition, and, as the plague, he had avoided those silken-swathed studio barnacles who are ever searching for a mental cocktail in the form of a poor young artist. He had seen many of them and their effect. The chap above him paid his rent by kisses on a fat hand or wrist. "It is easy," he said, with a very Latin-quarter lift of his smocked shoulders. "You speak of true art being unappreciated, act hungry, kiss their hands, breathe out a fervent, 'Without your stimulus——' and sigh. Then you can sell them anything, or, if you can bring yourself to do it"—he winked—"accept a loan. It is graceful to call them loans; then you sigh again, burst out with, 'Ah, cara, why should I refuse your help, when daily I take so much, when the thought of you sustains me?'"

"Hell!" said David. "I'd rather paint billboards."

"All very well for you to act lofty," answered his friend, his eyes suddenly bitter. "You have success."

"I never would have had it if I'd trained with the sort of crowd you follow," replied David. "A man can't go to sixteen pink teas a week and not have his canvases echo them. Your last thing—it showed in that. I heard the whanging of the orchestra, the inane dribble;

tasted the hard cake, full of nutshells, when I looked at it. You——"

"A fat lot you have to say," broke in the man who roomed above David. "You're going to marry one of that kind; you're——"

David spoke quickly, and the discussion ended with a slammed door and silence. Alone, David went over to stand in front of a winter landscape to see whether it had a "tea with lemon" flavor. It hadn't, and he was relieved. But he vowed, as he scraped his palette, to keep free from the skirts of "Rita's crowd." Mrs. Paret would not rustle around his studio as he felt she planned to. He was not going to have a balcony built in halfway up; not because he objected to the balcony, but because he did not want Paret money weighing him down with obligation. He was not going to have a Bokhara or a Kermansha on his floor until he could buy the Bokhara or the Kermansha. He was not going to have the refectory table from one of the departed Certosan monasteries until he could pay for it, nor, he vowed, would he take "that damned samovar!"

He laughed as he thought of Mrs. Paret's constant offerings. They were all planned to make his studio look like the studio scene in a road-traveling drama. If Mrs. Paret had had her way, David's studio would have been so terrible in character that he would have had no spot in which to work. And it would have borne exactly the same

relation to a real workshop as does the costume of a Dresden shepherdess to a sport suit.

"Can't be done," murmured David, as he laid down his palette to turn to the snow scene. He was proud of it, for he had really had put into it the cold. The onlooker could almost hear the smart snap of frozen twigs and the creak of stepped-on, hard-frozen snow. The blue shadows were gorgeous and the blackness of the tree trunks was intriguing. One wanted to thread through these, on into the picture. It was not at all surface.

His study was interrupted by a rap, and he called a rather absent "Come in" without turning. Susanne was the visitor, and she joined him in front of his last piece of work.

Her comment, although rough, was sincere. She simply said, "My heavens, Dave, it must make you happy."

"Well," he answered honestly, "it does. You see, I do know it's good."

She lowered her eyelids and surveyed the work through this narrowed vision. "You bet it's good," she murmured. Then her semidetachment ceased, and she spoke energetically and quickly.

"I came over with a hell of a piece of news," she announced, as she looked around David's table for his cigarettes. "You've got Jackie Paret's number, of course?"

"I've met him," answered David. That was enough. They both grinned.

"Well, it's about him I want to talk," said Susanne. "Of course, I don't owe them anything; that is, any one except Rita. She's helped me whenever she could—she has a miserable little allowance for all that she has to do—but I do hate to make a row. However——"

As she went on talking, David, settled on the edge of the table, frowned, once or twice grunted in a manner which indicated a deep disgust. "But she was entirely decent," he said, when at length Susanne had grown silent. "I

know, because Tilden tried some of his tricks, and she told him exactly where to get off."

"She says she loved Jack," said Susanne.

"How old is she?"

"Eighteen."

"Damn!"

"Oh, yes! I say so, too, but the question now is what to do about it. She says he said he'd marry her, but, of course, he didn't write that! I'm fond of the child. I used her for all of those palm-oil ads, and so she was around most of the time for about two months. Wonderful skin. I kept thinking she wasn't equipped for this sort of thing, she seemed so young, soft; and then I heard of how she squelched Tilden, and I felt better; and now——" Susanne spread out her hands, lifted her shoulders and eyebrows simultaneously.

David was smoking and staring at the new work which he did not see.

"It's all unfair!" broke out Susanne, suddenly angered. "Miserably unfair! There's nothing left for her now, and he is out of it. Goes on untouched, while she——" She stopped speaking, her breath coming fast. "I don't know why I'm bothering you," she continued, after two or three moments' lull, "for, of course, you're powerless. You can't say a word."

David laid down his pipe.

"Of course I shall speak," he said. "If you think I am going to build my marriage on that sort of a basis—plan for Rita's happiness with lies—you're wrong! That won't be done; it would bring neither of us anything but shame. I am going up to see Jack Paret now. Wish me luck, Susanne—I'll need it!"

When Mrs. Paret heard about her future son-in-law's interview with her favorite offspring, she was so enraged that she almost succumbed to an inclination to be natural. She had been rather upset by the news of Jackie's

latest indiscretion, but not nearly so upset as she was to hear that this interloper—for such David was—had dared to question the right of a Paret.

"You are telling me that he suggested marriage?" she boomed out. Jackie, who sat by her bedside—it was only half after ten—nodded. "My fan," requested Mrs. Paret weakly. Jackie handed her an absurdly gay, ostrich-plumed affair and then buried his face in his hands.

"My misfortune," he muttered, "is in being attractive to a certain sort of woman. This girl came to me, I assure you, came to me, fawned upon my pity, told me of her love, and I—I listened!"

"My poor, poor boy!" said Mrs. Paret.

Mrs. Paret sat upright in her satin-and-lace-trimmed bed. The hand that held the fan of curling plumes shook.

"Did David Stoddard think for a minute that the ancient and honored name of Paret could be so stained?" she inquired. "Did he think—" She rambled on at length, mixing family history and the code of a snob; prices paid for treasures of art and things said of the Paret by people who mattered; speaking of the manner in which a duke had once kissed her hand. Jackie listened and interspersed grave nods.

"He simply doesn't understand the game," he said at length sorrowfully. "We must remember that he is of the people."

"He must understand his difference," Mrs. Paret almost shouted. "Understand his difference!"

"It seems strange," said Jackie, "to have any one question my desire to do the right thing."

"My poor boy!" said Mrs. Paret.

"I may as well acknowledge that it—it hurt! I—almost lost my temper!"

"I hope you didn't touch him?" questioned Mrs. Paret. "That—that so levelling one!"

"I managed to restrain myself," answered Jackie, but an unusual flush rose to his cheeks as he said it, for he recalled David's loss of temper and his saying, "I'd like to paste you, but it wouldn't be fair, you poor, little, weak-kneed shrimp!"

David plowed toward his studio, knowing he had made a mess of the whole affair and wondering just how it would affect his relation with Rita.

He decided that it simply couldn't affect it, for he wasn't going to have her marooned for life among the trash that was her family.

Her real loveliness stood out glitteringly against the falseness that sudden money and wrong standards had produced; it made him feel too humble for his comfort and led him to write her his first love letter. This started abruptly and developed into the sort of a letter a man would write to his fiancée, without David's knowing it was going to. He wrote:

DEAR RITA: I don't know what your mother and brother are saying about me, but it was the only thing I could do. That girl was all right until your brother came along. I am sorry to bother you about this, Rita, but I know you will know, and I would like you to see my side.

This mustn't make any difference to us. If I knew it, and didn't try to do what I think right, it would hurt always and level our caring to a very small light.

"Our caring," he thought, stopped, frowned.

But if that is big enough to go on in spite of truth, it is the kind of thing that will help and steady us both. I know I need you—

Again he stopped, considered. "I do—" he muttered. He wrote on:

Need you and I think you need me. When I kiss you I know that all I will ever ask in this world is to make your way an easier, happier one. But, dear, we could not do it with lies and at the price of another's peace, could we?

Tell me when I may see you. I need to see you. I am worried. Only you can make me

forget worry. And that should tell you a good deal. My dearest—good-by.

DAVID.

He sat looking at the end for some time. The flame was slowly growing, and it had not overwhelmed him into understanding. Its quality argued a long life with no devastated after-wastes, but it also argued a gentle sliding, and not a fierce plunge, into love.

He knew that he wanted to see Rita and to know that "everything was all right."

But he did not know quite why he was so much perturbed.

The cat he had rescued from a barrel had come to be a real pet, and he had come to care for it. He supposed—very hazily, for he was not given to introspection—that that was the return one had from interest and care. But he did wish he knew about Rita and whether she was all right.

CHAPTER IX.

Rita came to him that evening.

"They think," she said, with an apprehensive look over her shoulder toward the door, "that I am with Susanne."

"Well," he said, his voice dropping from the weight of the unconscious caress it held, "is it all right?"

She didn't answer him immediately, but moved in his arms, and he stopped to press his warm cheek against her cool one. "Were you cold?" he whispered.

"I wanted the air," she answered. "I had the windows down."

He pushed aside her furs, touched her neck with his lips. It was the first time he had done that, and he found himself marvelously shaken and moved.

"I—I do need you," he assured her breathlessly.

"Oh, David," she murmured, then: "No, we must talk. I've only a little time and then I must go back. I am going to the Ardmores with mother."

She slipped out of her cape, settled before the fire, and he slipped down to a footstool before her.

"The verdict?" he asked, after he had captured both of her hands.

"If you would just take the samovar, it would help a little," she said. "Your independence hurts mother. Could you take that, dear?"

"If you say I must."

She laughed suddenly and he joined her mirth. "It is funny, but dreadful," she said; she was usually coherent with him, for he helped her and she was unafraid. "I hate your marrying into our family, David. We aren't up to you. I mean that, very much, but I see no way out of it." She freed a hand, touched his hair rather lingeringly. "David, you say this—this girl is only eighteen?"

After she left, he was aware of the fact that she had been in his room and in his arms. He found it a little difficult to think clearly. The vision of her in a dull-gold brocade evening gown remained. She had been beautiful in the most glorious way; warm, full-bodied, maternal.

"Madonna face," he mused, and then he closed his eyes. He was thinking of how great a peace would come with the hiding of his face against her throat. He projected this to tired nights, after days gone wrong; when lights wouldn't repeat their canvas-starting yesterdays and models were either too lax or rigid. "Then," he thought, "she would fix things and it would be all right."

He made up his mind to tell her how happy she would make him and of how very much he dreamed about the future. The idea of rescue as his sole aim was departing. He felt as if he had, much of the time, been a clumsy fool.

"But she probably didn't miss anything," he decided, "and I'll make it up—make it up—"

Still, he was sure, he could not offer her love's morning.

"She won't know," he thought, "and twilight will satisfy us both."

She did not know, but she went away troubled by his explosive "I *do* need you!" It had been so full of surprise and self-reassurance. She thought of it during the long stories of a dinner partner who was attracted by her new air of confidence and her new outer self. And for the first time in many months one of her gray moods of self-doubt settled close.

"I suppose," she mused, "that I would live on, even if he weren't a part of my life—that I could——"

The next months proved that she was right.

CHAPTER X.

It began with the dinner partner who was a widower of unassailable connection, much money, and an inclination to try it over again. The fact that Rita was engaged meant little to him, for he was heavy-jawed and usually got what he wanted.

"Deuced attractive girl, your sister," he announced to Jackie, whom he met at a club on the following morning. "Where's she been hiding all these years?"

"Been abroad a good deal," answered Jackie, who knew that was better than proclaiming Rita a nonentity, "and doesn't care much about gadding."

"That so?" said the heavy-jawed interestedly. He was the more attracted, since his first wife had been so much on the go that he hardly knew her by sight. "Look here," he continued, "she like music? I have a box for——"

Jackie saw, as he listened, the contemptuous features of his soon-to-be brother-in-law.

He assured the newly attracted that his sister was "no end keen about music" and that the plan was "frightfully jolly." And then he went home, although he had been there but three days before, to interview his mother. He

found her en route to a morning musicale, but, after a word or so, she was willingly detained.

"More an' more I think of it," said Jackie, as he lounged against a heavy French cabinet, "more impossible Rita's marryin' that chap seems. Impossible; don't give a damn about form—thought I'd put him on to a few things, but he wouldn't let me. Now, I ask you, can we stand for it?"

His mother, who saw no other relief in sight, spoke purringly of Rita's happiness.

"Just what I'm thinking of," said her son, "but wouldn't she be happier with Gibson Franklin?"

"What do you mean?" asked his mother. Her lorgnette slipped from her fingers to clatter on the floor, but neither heeded it. Jackie explained what he meant.

"First one no end of a gadder," he said, after his prefacing explanations, "and Gib liked Rita's style. Gotta say this much for David: he did teach her how to rig out. Looked like a stained-glass window last night. Just the kind to attract a widower with three children and couple of houses to keep up. Rita could have him——"

"She shall!" boomed out Mrs. Paret.

"Glad to hear it," said Jackie. "Glad you think she will——"

"Think?" echoed Mrs. Paret scornfully. "I am the best judge. Why, Rita is no more than a child. Ask him to dinner Friday night—no, Thursday—we'll have a plain family dinner, the sort that he would think proper for three children—or was it five? But it doesn't matter, and we will get him to talk of them. The thing is done! Mercy, I shall be late——" She hurried off—she had to; she had already missed talking through two numbers. After she settled, she prattled to her nearest neighbor of Rita. "How devoted," thought the neighbor, "she is to that plain, gauche girl!"

The whole thing was remarkably simple. After Mrs. Paret had confided her unhappiness over Rita's engagement to Gibson Franklin, he began to pay his devoted court. This troubled Rita until a larger trouble came to overshadow it.

"Doesn't he know I'm engaged?" she asked of her mother.

"Yes, dear, he knows, but——"

"But what?" asked Rita. She was sitting opposite her mother in a breakfast room, where they sometimes lunched on those rare occasions when they were at home or alone.

"His pity is touched," said Mrs. Paret eloquently. "He knew of David's old affair—quite a consuming flame, I assure you, my pet—he swore he would never love another woman as he did that girl—an actress who jilted him for a pickle manufacturer—that was in Paris, I believe. Mr. Franklin thinks that you should have entire devotion, not the second offering of a man who has lived too——"

"It is none of Gibson Franklin's business," broke in Rita.

"My dear!" protested her mother.

"And I don't believe the story," continued Rita, although David's overintense assurances of needing her again came to mind.

"The story is true," said Mrs. Paret weightily, "true—it was that which led Jack to so keenly resent his interference——"

Rita stood up, left the room.

"My pet!" called her mother, but to no avail. "My, my!" she wailed, after her daughter's footsteps had dimmed, "it will be hard. I mustn't frown!"

Rita asked David about the story that night after dinner. The time was unfortunate, for he had dined with his fiancée and Mrs. Paret and had been, from the latter's babble, much irritated. So, when Rita asked for the history of an affair which suddenly seemed flat, he grew morose.

"Yes," he answered, "I was gone. Head over heels gone—made a first-class ass of myself. Thank Heaven, I'll never act like that again!"

Rita's hands grew cold, and because they trembled she hid them in the graceful folds of the rose gown she wore.

"Loved her desperately?" she probed.

"Mad about her!" he acknowledged. That any misunderstanding could be, he was too stupid to imagine.

"We will be very sensible," she said.

"Of course," he answered.

He felt a finality that he could not analyze in their good night, a passion from Rita that left him burning and at last awake. "You give me," he said brokenly, "everything I want—could need!"

She smiled faintly. She had misunderstood again.

In her own room she rang to find out whether her mother was in, and, finding that she was, went to her sitting room.

"Send Hortense away or close the door," she said. Mrs. Paret was glad to comply with the request.

"I have been so unhappy since lunch time," she said, as she sat down near her daughter, "that we should disagree—my pet!"

Rita ignored this.

"I've come to say," she announced, "that I will marry Mr. Franklin if you want me to; none of us have entirely pleased you, and I should like to. I can now, and I am willing to. I don't care what I do; my marrying David Stoddard has become impossible."

"He was——" began Mrs. Paret.

"Please!" broke in Rita.

Her mother grew silent as she wondered why marrying David had become impossible. Rita did not explain that what David needed was a sensible wife and that she could never be that to him, and so she did not explain at all.

In bed she lay long wakeful. The idea of her inspiring passion became a

thing to smile upon, but the smile was not the right sort. She saw a hundred proofs of David's temporizings with love; felt a thousand shames as she remembered how she had poured out her heart. She knew, without doubt, that he had only pitied her.

"I suppose," she said aloud, "he saw me as I am and pitied me."

She stared into solid black dark for a long, long time. The street noises lowered, flickered out to the occasional passing of a motor or a truck.

"At least," she murmured, as the dawn began to gray the sky, "I have done one thing——"

She was thinking of silly, selfish, unsatisfied Mrs. Paret. There had been Jackie, who would not marry as he should, and Maud, who would be divorced, and Rita, worst of all, who could not shine.

"But I can marry and have a position," she decided, "and I might as well marry as she wants me to—now——"

She lay back. Sleep crept softly close. When it gripped her, she dreamed that David bent above her; a new David with a passion-tortured face; a David who said, "I love you—I love you! I love you! I have *wanted* you so! My darling—never—*never* leave me!"

CHAPTER XI.

David got back to a semisane life a few weeks after he heard from Rita, from a new Rita who dismissed him with a vaguely expressed excuse. After the first shock he could not believe that it was true, but there was finality, as well as strength in her. "I think you won't even try to see me, David, when I tell you that I don't want to see you, that seeing you would be hard."

After the shock diminished, the real pain set in. His own lack of self-understanding made the most poignant incident; and, as he hurried forth purposely

boomeranged curses, he wondered that she had ever looked at him, while he, looking at her, revealed himself as a stupid, blundering fool through his blindness. He hoped, miserably, that she had not felt the lack of real love, the hollowness of the things he had cast before her feet. The thought of this more than once made him groan aloud, writhe mentally from self-scorn, and made the future stretch as a cold, unbearable eternity.

She had said, in her small, unsteadily written note, that she felt they were unsuited and that she was afraid she could not help missing certain things. These, in his heaviness, he imagined to be material, and he managed to achieve a moment's disgust over her rating of life's counting factors. However, the disappointment in her was short-lived and he grew humble and wondered that he had dared to ask her to give up so much.

All that his perspective of distance which allowed him to see so much more truly than she could arrayed itself before his mental gaze: the sweet, moist-smelling flowers which overflowed the countless beautiful vases, the soft rugs with their gorgeous colorings, the ceiling which had been taken from a palace in Tuscany, the paneling which had been brought from an Adams-trimmed house in London, the painting which lent to the rooms so much color—every wealth-bought luxury and beauty against his few plain rooms. As he thought of Rita's background he saw Rita; and when he did, doubt again rose as to her sincerity in saying that she would miss things. Even after a careful inventory and reckoning, he could not believe that they would matter so much. He tried for two days to dream the whole thing a lie; but when, on the third, he heard of the devotion of a widower who was a power in matters of money, he gave up, to confine himself to thinking of the truth. He did a great deal of that; so much that he should have been able

to stop after he went to bed, but he couldn't. He grew rather thin, and Susanne tried to coax him into eating with all sorts of little suppers, but she made no impression.

"You really cared, didn't you?" she asked him boldly on one occasion.

She was startled by his laugh, the bitterness of his look.

"Yes," he answered, "I am a fool, and I really cared."

She thought that he was revealing his feeling about Rita, but he wasn't. He was, in reality, revealing his feeling about himself.

March blew past, April came, May, then June, and David knew that Rita would go to Marion for a time, spend a few weeks at Southampton, end the season with an aunt in Newport, and then, in the fall, come back to buy frocks, hat, gay lingerie for her trousseau. He brought himself to talk to Susanne about her marriage and, after the first plunge, found the talking a relief.

"Is he decent?" he asked, as he devoted himself to filling his pipe.

"Utter fool, but good enough," answered Susanne sharply.

"Suppose he'll be good to her?" David heard himself say. He congratulated himself upon the admirable carelessness of his tone. He had really done it beautifully. However, he jammed his hands in his pockets because they would shake, and he looked away from Susanne's direction because he was not quite sure about how much his eyes mirrored.

"Suppose so," answered Susanne, "but you, David, you were the man who would have made her happy."

He didn't answer that, and they went on to speak of the little model who had gone West to marry a man who was large enough to forget Jackie and the thing that he had done.

David found the summer sped past too quickly. He wanted, as he had never wanted anything, to push away the fall. "After it's over," he said to Susanne, "I hope I'll feel better, but I can't think of its actually happening. In a way, in spite of everything, it seemed like a bad dream; but after November it will be a fact."

He walked a good deal during those summer evenings; walked all over, but often found himself taking the bus so that his ramblings might begin near the big brownstone house with the gratings over its lower windows.

One night he stood in the shadows on the opposite side of the street, watching a faint light in the room he knew to be Rita's. And, as he did, he deliberately tortured himself with imagining how it would be if they were still engaged and he went in, went to the library, found her there—

And she would get up and say, "Oh, David," rather breathlessly, as she had, and he wouldn't apologize for his leaping pulses nor for the fact that he loved holding her in his arms. But he would gather her close, very close, and hold her so, and he would say: "I love you! I love you! I have always loved you, and I have been a fool."

And then—

He turned away blindly as he became aware that his pausing was becoming conspicuous. There was no use of it anyway, for he was not engaged to her, and in the fall she was to marry another man.

CHAPTER XII.

The closing of summer, which came with the quiet creeping on of autumn chill, did something to David Stoddard. His flesh, echoing his spirit's misery, succumbed, and one October night he found himself either too hot or too cold and vastly uncomfortable when he tried to breathe.

Susanne, to whose domain he had

gone in search of ginger tea and advice, was upset.

"You *are* all in, aren't you?" she demanded, as she laid a cool hand on his forehead.

"A little groggy," he acknowledged. "Used to get colds like this when I was a kid—doctor called 'em bronchitis then."

"I'd see a doctor to-morrow," she advised.

"Well, perhaps I will, but I'm sure this stuff'll help——" He looked down at the glass he held, with his words, then set it down, for a sudden chill was making its contents lick the edges and threaten overflow.

"Sit down," ordered Susanne, and he did. She swaddled him in ridiculously hued and shaped garments for man wear, poked up the fire, and then telephoned her favorite physician. To David's feeble protests she was hostile.

"Your attitude," she said with a frown, "belongs on Avenue A. Summoning a physician is not out of the ordinary, you know."

"It is for me," disagreed David, after which he lay back and closed his eyes. The dizziness which had been drawing closer all day gripped him tight. At first he thought of shipboard, and then, with the haze that sickness gave to him, decided it *was* a ship on which he stood.

"What line?" he murmured, and then, disconsolately, "I suppose, the American," for David's purse was the sort that usually put him on that. Dimly he was aware of Susanne, whom he could not help calling Rita, and of a man, and then came more bumps, intervals of sanity, during which he was much bewildered, and a small, clean-smelling, too-white room.

Pleurisy and pneumonia, having gotten a good start before David was forced to fight them with quiet, did their best, and he lay very ill for many partly conscious days.

Once and again he thought he saw Rita, but when he began to get well she failed him, and so he imagined her to have been only a part of his fleeting moments.

However, among the flowers which came to him were many fresh, wet-smelling violets which bore no card, and through them he saw a girl he had once thought stupid, plain, and uninspiring. "At least," he thought, as he stared at the purple-blue mass of fragrance on the near-by table, "she thinks of me without bitterness." His eyes filled—he was very weak—and then deliberately he allowed himself to dream her sitting near, touching his forehead, his sick-softened hand. His thoughts had made him lower eyelids, and the "my dear!" that came from the doorway so fitted his mentally made scene that he jumped as he saw Susanne.

"Sleeping?" she asked contritely.

"No," he answered; "thinking. Damnable occupation, thinking."

She came in, sat down by the bed, and pulled off her gloves. "Not always," she disagreed.

"It is when you crave the peace of laying your head on the breast of the woman you love," he answered savagely, "and know that she loves some one else." A little color rose in his sunken cheeks, color which was occasioned by embarrassment over the depth of his feeling let loose in words.

"Oh, my dear, dear friend!" said Susanne. She looked at him in a baffled way, and after groping for words muttered something of his finding some one else some day, the eminently fitting some one who would make his every dream come true.

"Nonsense!" he said harshly. "It is Rita, but I'm a bear. You come way up here when you want to work, and then I bite you for being decent. Tell me how work is going?"

She told him as he looked at the violets on his table, and she realized that

in his weakened state it would be hard to keep him from being morbid over that for which they stood.

"Going to let her cripple you?" she asked crisply, when a lull after a question revealed how little attention he was giving to her.

"No," he answered slowly, "I am not. I am with those girls in the down-East tragedies who tremolo, 'My life shall be splendid in spite of you!' but it will be damned lonely, Susanne, damned lonely!" He laughed a little, mirthlessly, and she shook her head.

"I suppose I seem a quitter," he acknowledged; "but I am so tired and disgusted with myself. I think, perhaps, if I had let her know of how I felt, I could have taught her that I could make up for the things I couldn't give her, but I was so busy looking up in the sky for a thing I held in my arms——"

He turned his head abruptly, grew silent. Susanne patted his hand.

"You're a wonderful pal," he said a little thickly.

On the night before Rita's wedding day she went down to see Susanne. She did not know that David had returned from the hospital, and, if she had, perhaps the call would have overridden caution.

"I am going to Susanne's," she stated from the doorway of her mother's boudoir in answer to a sirupy, "Whither bound, my pet?"

Mrs. Paret frowned.

"You'll be back in plenty of time to dress for dinner, of course," she said; "you must look your sweetest——"

Rita promised and then answered a telephone call from her fiancé. She answered coldly, because she could not help it, and her attention wandered over his hectic mutterings about his bachelor dinner. "Just a few people with you, your mother said?" she heard, and replied with, "Only close friends——"

He told her that one of the children had a heavy cold in the head and made light mention of the morrow, and then came his adieu, and she turned toward the door, before which waited the motor.

A premonition made her tremble all the way downtown and left her breathless as she tapped on Susanne's door.

"Hello," she said, with a rather rigid smile, as Susanne answered her tap and asked her in. "I thought I'd run down—to say good-by——"

"I suppose our ways do part here," said Susanne dryly.

Suddenly Rita began to cry.

"Don't," she begged, "*don't*, Susanne. I am so miserable that I don't know how—to go on."

Susanne drew close, put an arm around her cousin.

"Rita," she said, "you seemed to care that one day at the hospital. What has made all this tangle?"

Incoherently Rita explained, and heartlessly Susanne laughed.

"Just think," she mused, "of what a fit your mother'll have after you phone her—or shall I do that? Perhaps a note with a messenger would be better. Have you any preference in divines? What? Oh, go see David, you little fool, go see David! He'll tell you!"

And he did, in a sort of a way, but incoherently.

He was lying on a long bench feeling the utter sag which comes at the end of the first getting-around days. His studio, in semidarkness, depressed him, and he lacked the courage to get up and switch on a light. His will power had been weakened by the weeks of fever, and thoughts of Rita, his fatuous stupidity about her, closed in upon him. Musings about her made him groan, then laugh rather harshly. "Fool!" he muttered. "Fool!" For in echo he had felt the close pressure of her in his arms.

He struggled up, switched on a low light, stood, waiting for the weak dizziness which had swept him to pass. Then a tap, his "Come"—and Rita.

His lips moved, but he could not immediately speak.

"Won't you," he said at length, "sit down?"

She did, upon the bench, and he settled by her. He was afraid to try to reach the chair which stood on the opposite side of the fireplace. The low coal fire broke suddenly into a leaping blue flame. And then—her hand over his, and he turned. "To-morrow?" he whispered, his voice uneven.

"Never to any one but you," she answered. "I thought you didn't care, but now I know what Susanne meant. I see——"

She was clinging to him, and he forgot the fact that he had been sick. The new, wonderful strength came. He drew, held her close. "Dearest, dearest!" he heard her whisper, "*dearest!*"

Of course, Mrs. Paret was overcome. The news of her daughter's marriage to David Stoddard sent her into hysterics and to bed. Somewhat unwillingly Jackie went down to see his sister and his—new brother.

He had always considered "the boulder 'impossible!'"

When he returned he took a stiff drink and then went to interview his mother.

"The talk, the talk," Mrs. Paret was moaning as he entered, "the *talk!*"

"They're going abroad," said Jackie, as he settled. "To Venice, I think. Rented a palace—one floor, at least, I believe. It'll quiet down a little here before they get back."

"You saw Gibson?" moaned Mrs. Paret.

"Yeh; gave him a note from her. He said she had gone off on her looks, anyway, and never asked about the children any more. Didn't even seem to care

when he told her that Marie had used nine handkerchiefs in one day. What he wanted was a real mother for his children——"

"Her prettiness had vanished!" boomed out Jackie's mother.

"Looked rather well this morning," admitted Jackie.

"What was she doing?" asked Maudie from the doorway of an adjoining room.

"Scraping at a pan with the handle of a paint brush," answered Jack. "She tried to fry some eggs without butter. It seems they need butter."

"Fried eggs!" moaned Mrs. Paret. "Fried eggs! Maud, my smelling salts!"

Maud supplied them.

"What was he doing?" asked Maud, as she drew near.

"Kissing her when I entered. I didn't knock. I was frightfully angry, simply beside myself! But when I got in—saw how things were—I cooled down. No use rowing when the thing was done."

"She shall have her clothes and not another thing," promised Mrs. Paret. "Not another thing!"

"She said she'd be glad to have them," answered Jack, "but that they were all she did want."

He didn't tell his mother of what Rita had said to him before his departure, although it proved to be a true prophecy.

"Jack," she had said, her hands on his shoulders, "all of our family have been selfishly mean and all for mean, small things. Maud has been bored, and she is demanding excitement in the form of a divorce. You have been bored, and you have demanded your particular form of time killer, which hurts harder and more wickedly than Maud's. I have never been selfish, and I think it is time I began. I have differed only in this: I am being selfish in taking for

myself something strong and fine, and some day—some day—you all will brag about being related to David, and you will be happy that I was wise enough to follow the family tradition!"

"To think," murmured David, as Mrs. Paret, in another part of the city, requested her smelling salts, "to think I ever thought you anything but utterly

lovely! You are beautiful, sweet, enchanting—oh, my *darling!*"

She was lovely—stupid David! David did not know that even the plainest women grow beautiful when seen through the mirror that little Dan holds, little Dan who says, I'm sure: "Look at her! My work! Plain, my dear, positively plain, until I made him kiss her!"

THE END.



VILLANELLE OF VICTORY

MOTES in the sunshine of a little star,
Yet we are lords of beauty for a span.
We have found dreams at the extremest bar.

Down subtle-scented ways where roses are,
We throb to ardors old when Earth began,
Motes in the sunshine of a little star.

We carry banners in an endless war
Against the dark that guards Aldebaran.
We have found dreams at the extremest bar.

Still we are lords of beauty none may mar.
Leaving the pallid gods, we follow Pan:
Motes in the sunshine of a little star.

Belovéd, we shall cherish every scar,
Each keen adventure in the flesh of Man.
We have found dreams at the extremest bar.

And though we mourn that Sirius is far,
Impotent, proud, we halt before no ban.
Motes in the sunshine of a little star,
We have found dreams at the extremest bar.

WALTER ADOLPHE ROBERTS.

Ainslee's Books of the Month

THE NOON-MARK, by Mary S. Watts; The Macmillan Company, New York.

IN this year's output of novels the Middle West has, assuredly, come in for its share of analyzing and psychoanalyzing back and forth. One of the soundest in mental research and observation, if not in actual plot, is Mrs. Watts' "The Noon-Mark." In it she recounts the activity of the various classes of society of a Middle Western city. We grant the political equality of all citizens of the United States, but, though they are "created free and equal," there are, nevertheless, cultural, social, and inherited differences which make them of varying weight and significance, even of importance, in the social scheme. And it is these subtle differences, which make for the unevenness of organized society, which provide the theme for "The Noon-Mark."

Realistically and with a sane freedom from moralizing, Mrs. Watts tells the story of the Stieffel family—the plodding, but prematurely invalidated father, the heedless mother, the six restless, alert children, whose playground is the "dumps" at the rear of the "mission-finish" house, the thrifty seamstress aunt, the efficient oldest daughter, Nettie, and the sentimental cousin, Millie. Each is depicted with an honest regard for detail and with an insight into the lives of the lower middle classes. From the rubber plants on the front steps to the kitchen that is used in emergencies as a dining room, no detail in the furnishing of or activity of the household is neglected. The selection of detail amounts almost to genius.

In contrast to this crowded household, across the "dumps" on the North

Hill we find the well-appointed homestead of the cultivated McQuairs, where the domestic machinery functions smoothly, noiselessly, and out of sight. Randon McQuair—here the author makes her one bow to the utterly commonplace—falls in love with Nettie Stieffel. But the inevitable and intangible differences of inheritance and class cannot be bridged. Randon, at first, will not admit any incompatibility of position, but he is constantly and persistently reminded that despite her admirable straightforwardness and impatience with sham and inefficiency, she nevertheless lacks—and, what is more tragic to him, cannot acquire—the inherent qualities of his class. But it is Nettie who sees most clearly the incongruity of their relationship and she insists upon releasing Randon.

In the conference of the aunts of the engaged couple the contrast between the groups is most manifest. Each is a typical representative of her class. Mrs. McQuair's doctrine is "never to forget oneself and yet constantly to remember others." Nettie's aunt Julia is governed by no such inhibition and self-discipline. She gives hysterical vent to her natural feelings. But, in the final analysis, both hold the same views, though the expression of them differs so widely. Both are fundamentally of the same human stuff.

The story of the "Noon-Mark" is ordinary enough. Somehow novelists have a way of overlooking plot these days. In the delineation of character, in the painstaking regard for detail, Mrs. Watts excels in "The Noon-Mark" as in "The Rise of Jenny Cushing" and "The Boardman Family."

MOON-CALF, A Novel, by Floyd Dell; Alfred A. Knopf, New York.

THIS is a first novel that the publisher himself, on the book's jacket, praises highly. His judgment, or at least business acumen, is justified by the announcement that five printings within three months have been necessary to meet the demands of the buying public. In short, the book is a financial success. Readers who like only successes—and there are many readers in this class—will of course turn to the tale with eagerness.

The title sends the curious reader to the dictionary. He can guess what the word means, sense its connotation, but he needs Webster, very likely, to know for a certainty that the noun may designate either "a monster, a misshapen being" or "a dolt, a stupid fellow." Some readers of the novel will prefer the one description, others the other, and still others neither. A few may like to translate the hero's name, Felix Fay, into "happy elf," as the author at least once suggests might be done, and let it go at that. That would be a mistake, for above all things the novel is not a glad book. At any rate, such is the title. It needed some explanation. Perhaps the author picked it mainly to disarm criticism. For if any one finds Felix stupid and a dolt, he need only reply, "Well, I told you so!"

The story, briefly, is the life of Felix, beginning with a rapid and interesting sketch of his parents and grandparents. It takes us to the time when he is somewhere around twenty and has made the decision to go to the big city and write. The novel ends with the cry, "Chicago! Chicago!" In the interim, Felix Fay has been a sickly, dreamy, sensitive child, fond of books, in Maple, Illinois; has moved with his family to the larger town of Vickley; and when the family breaks up has gone to live with his married brother at the still larger town

of Port Royal—the last stop before Chicago. All this time he analyzes himself and the world about. He becomes an agnostic, an atheist, a monist, a socialist. He makes the acquaintance, browsing in libraries, of Heine, Ibsen, Haeckel, Shaw, Verlaine, Ingersoll, and Maeterlinck, after having wandered through outlying paths in the history and literature of the world. He organizes a literary society in school and later takes a hand in directing the socialist "local" in Port Royal. He has two or three love affairs, the last rather serious; works in candy factories, in a printing shop, on the staff of two different newspapers. He has written many poems, had a few accepted by the *Century*, and has begun a novel. At times he is a superhero, planning to make the world a happier and more beautiful spot; then, again, he is "bourgeois" and kisses a servant girl in the dark tunnel of a roller-coaster.

This is not the whole story by any means, but an inkling, a suggestion of what you may expect. You will find the yarn interesting, a worthy attempt at doing a job worth while. To read it is not wasting time.

The first part of the book is done best. Here Felix is a boy; and Mr. Dell, recalling in tranquillity, evidently, scenes in his own boyhood, finds the selection of incidents, which is necessary even in a realistic novel, done for him by his "recollective imagination." We get the feeling of reality. Later, the technique seems more journalistic, a series of events, and often arguments, done with careful regard to detail. This is the method in much of "Changing Winds," "Sonia," and "Mr. Britling." It is scarcely the greatest art; at any rate, it is not sentimental slop. While we miss the transforming power of great imagination, we at least get facts, for Mr. Dell knows what he is writing about. It is something to know how a candy machine works, how to "feed

a press," or how to go up to a bar and order large beers for the crowd.

The ending of the book suggests that a sequel may soon follow, taking Felix, perhaps, from Chicago to New York. If such is the case, the new novel ought to be greater, for Felix will have matured and Mr. Dell, seeking beauty in truth, will have a more sympathetic, inspiring hero to present. In the meanwhile, we trust that he will not begin too many sentences with "also" and "always," use the word "intrigued," or write "agnostic" with a "k," thinking that he has made it thereby dialectical.

ENSLAVED, by John Masfield; The Macmillan Company, New York.

IF the reader of this review has never read and honestly enjoyed poetry, let him or her begin with Masfield. With him there is no necessity for sham, of posing as a highbrow, of making believe that you like something which doesn't really move or at least hit you. Try his salt-water ballads and you will see how stories can be told; you will feel at the same time the emotion, color, music, pictorial beauty in the lines—if you read with any care at all—and realize why these tales were put into verse and not into everyday prose. For a tragic story dramatically narrated, take "The Daffodil Fields," or his more recent "Reynard the Fox" for a vivid, stirring description of an English countryside in action. Here you will find the happy spirit of Chaucer and at times echoes of his technique, as nearly as any one in more modern times can reproduce them. Read his short lyrics, expressions of joy and sadness, of delight and yearning, and experience the feeling that ought to come to you when in the presence of true art.

Few will deny that Masfield is a genuine poet, a writer who, when he composes, generally does so because he must, because his thoughts and feelings

demand expression. There is little in his work which is insincere, much that seems genuinely inspired. Best of all, perhaps, he puts newness and individuality into old forms, and achieves within rigid limits a freedom which many present-day poets fail in arriving at, even when they hurl aside all laws.

All these remarks apply in the main to the present volume. Here and there, we must admit, however, his lines leave us cold, especially in parts of the first poem, "Enslaved." In these places his simplicity deteriorates into obviousness, the music is more of the tom-tom; we miss the unexpected touch that Masfield generally, and in the greater part of this volume, gives to even the most commonplace. Luckily these lapses—and they must be expected even in the best of poets—are not too frequent, and we find lines enough, like the following from "The Passing Strange," where there is some emotion in the music, and the philosophy, while not brazenly new, is far, very far, from banal:

But in the darkest hour of night
When even the foxes peer for sight
The byre-cock crows; he feels the light.

So, in this water mixed with dust,
The byre-cock spirit crows from trust
That death will change because it must,

For all things change, the darkness changes,
The wandering spirits change their ranges,
The corn is gathered to the granges, etc.

A characteristic of this collection of poems is Masfield's excellent use of the supernatural, as in "The Hounds of Hell" and in "Cap on Head." In the latter, the tale of the O'Neill is told in a manner rarely met with since the days of Coleridge. His "devilry," as Masfield calls it, shows genius.

Of the rest of the volume, all the poems, with the exception of the last lyric, are sonnets, some singly, others connected into a sequence, sometimes to tell a story as in "Animula." Don't skip this tragedy. Nor yet "On Growing Old."



In Broadway Playhouses

By Dorothy Parker

Standing Room Only, and Very Little of That.

PROBABLY with some idea of starting the new year clean, in the financial sense of the word, the local producers spread themselves upon their midwinter offerings. In regard to gorgeousness of setting and costliness of cast, their *carte* has been little short of *blanche*, while in numbers alone the line-up of entertainments is fairly staggering.

With a hospitality warmly reminiscent of the old South, the managers regally opened up new shows for the delectation of those gentle visitors who came on for their yearly outing. The conscientious transient was in a really serious way. Not only was there a bewildering list of freshly opened plays to be gone through, but there were all the established successes which every one back in Springfield said he simply must not miss. It looked for a time as if he would have to stay over, in order to work in the trip to the Hippodrome and the annual visit to "Lightnin'."

However, things regulated themselves nicely when he tried to get tickets. After a tour of the box offices and the agencies, he found that there would really be no congestion whatever. The ticket venders fixed it all up for him so that he could attend a performance of "Daddy Dumplings," drop in at several movie exhibitions, see Fifth Ave-

nue by electric light from the top of a bus, and spend the remaining evenings of his stay gaining health and strength reading quietly in his room.

It is indeed a poisonous production which cannot pack them in to the very exits, these nights. The show which is unable to display its S. R. O. placard must be just on the point of hanging out its S O S sign. Even the mildest of successes play to flatteringly full houses, while disappointed crowds, turned coldly away from the recognized hits, tramp the streets muttering darkly of overthrowing the government. If one is able to obtain tickets at all for "Enter Madame," "The First Year," or "Irene," they are dated so far ahead that it will probably be too warm to go to the theater then, anyway, while it seems as if the only way eventually to get into "The Bat" is to enter the applicant's name at birth.

Undoubtedly these are rough times, and every one is mercilessly hit by them, but theater tickets seem to be the last things that the great American people can't bear to cut down on. None so poor but he can scrape together enough for two on the aisle four or five times a week. People may have to ease up a bit on the groceries, but they must buy tickets for "Ladies' Night."

But, you will be among the first to

point out, research work to ascertain the economic precepts, if any, of the theatergoing public has peculiarly little to do with a review of the recent plays. You never said a truer thing. I'll get a fresh start this very minute.

The inevitable dramatization of "Miss Lulu Bett" lately came to production at the Belmont Theater. Naturally, any one who felt tenderly for the book expected the worst upon hearing that they were going to make a play out of it. You know what happens when they start dramatizing things. The resulting play may be, and frequently is, a popular success, but, oh, the effect upon us human, sensitive plants when we see our worshiped characters dragged from the cool privacy of the printed page and thrust, blinking, into the glare of the spotlight! There are those of us who felt, as we tottered from the theater at the conclusion of "Seventeen," that we could never smile again. And "Miss Lulu Bett," in especial, offered its dramatist such a truly unique opportunity of messing it up. Decidedly, it looked as if all hope had better be immediately abandoned.

Those morbid anticipations make it harrowingly difficult to pass on to posterity an opinion of "Miss Lulu Bett" as a play. It is almost impossible to discern whether it is an exceptionally good play, or whether it is so much better than you ever dared to expect that it seems like an exceptionally good play. Personally, we lean heavily toward the former theory, but the decision is all in the eye of the beholder.

There were once all sorts of rumors as to who the chosen dramatist of "Miss Lulu Bett" was to be. Not a few held out for St. John Ervine, while another large contingent went about taking people aside and whispering that Rupert Hughes had been elected. There was some little talk of Augustus Thomas, and here and there George V. Hobart's name was brought up.

Everybody, too, had an individual notion of the exact actress to play *Lulu Bett*. Minnie Dupree probably pooled the greatest number of votes, but Beryl Mercer gave her a close run, and Maude Adams was no mean third. The progressive element thought it would be a perfectly splendid idea to give some nice, hard-working actress, hitherto identified with rôles of a distinctly other sort, a chance to branch out and show what she could do with the simple home drama, say, Billie Burke or Marie Dressler. Around this office, yearning thoughts of Pauline Lord were entertained, yearnings which even now are not dispelled, although the play was seen long since. In fact, Mrs. Thomas Whiffen was probably the only American actress who was not spoken of in connection with the rôle of *Lulu*.

Brock Pemberton, the producer, got around all that very nicely by intrusting the dramatizing of the novel to Zona Gale, its author. He did something even deeper than that: he got Miss Gale to attend the rehearsals, and see that the characters looked and acted just as she had intended them to. Deadly work, this, on the part of the management, for though you may say "Heavens, Carroll McComas is the last person I should choose for *Lulu Bett*!" or "That certainly isn't my idea of *Ina Deacon*," the producer is ever this much ahead of you; maybe the characters have not come to life as you, the innocent reader, pictured them, but they are strictly in accordance with their own author's ideas. It leaves you, as some people have a habit of saying, flat.

So it is somewhat difficult to discuss Miss McComas' performance of the title part, because one comes bang up against Miss Gale's official approval of it. Many of the critics thought that Miss McComas became too dazzlingly beautiful as the play progressed, but to our way of thinking, it was quite the other way. I cannot add hastily

enough that that isn't meant to sound the way it does. All it means is that she seemed overconscientious about looking plain, and a trifle too determined to be tragically repressed during the first scenes. Louise Closser Hale doubtless gets more than any other actress could out of the rôle of old *Mrs. Bett*; it seems, often, that she gets rather more out of its comedy possibilities than is absolutely necessary. Catherine Calhoun Doucet is a perfect *Ian Deacon*, and Willard Roberston and Brigham Royce are so entirely *Neil Cornish* and *Ninian Deacon* that one is worried for their future; it does not seem as if they could possibly play any other parts. A performance deadly in its accuracy is Lois Shore's impersonation of the child *Monona*—a performance doubly blessed, for one had quivered with dread at the thought that *Monona*, on the stage, would probably be a quaint and sunshiny kiddie, saying prayers in footed night garments.

Mr. Pemberton has given the settings the meticulous attention they deserved; unfortunately, it takes slightly longer to change the settings than it does to fill the tank at the Hippodrome, and the orchestra takes mean advantage of the time and renders all of Ethelbert Nevin's published works.

Miss Gale has transferred her novel to the stage so carefully that scarcely a drop of its atmosphere is spilled. Perhaps that is why the play seems sometimes to drag a bit; it is that kind of an atmosphere. It is unavoidable that some of those things which, in the book, hit hardest, fall with a soft, apologetic thud, in the play. The audience does not have the benefit of the author's crisp side remarks, as her readers did. For instance, *Dwight Herbert Deacon*—just a few words of explanation from Miss Gale, and there he stood, in his appalling reality, with his ponderous jesting, his oily cruelty, his delivery of such sentiments as "Haste makes

waste," as pompously as if he had just composed them, and his curious patience and tenderness with the old. But it takes a large number of words from William Holden, who plays the part, before you begin to get the idea.

Things like that must always happen, I suppose. As long as they dramatize books, the drama must suffer by comparison with its parent novel. Yet, admitting all that, "*Miss Lulu Bett*" is still a truthful, interesting, and amusing play, and seems well entitled to a rating up among the best-written and best-acted plays of the season.

It goes without saying that "*Deburau*," unveiled at the Belasco Theater, has all the traditional photographic faithfulness to detail. But there is much more that cannot go without saying—Lionel Atwill's beautiful performance of *Deburau*, and David Belasco's exquisite production of the piece. Usually, it is the startling correctness of detail in a Belasco offering which stands out above all else, including play and actors; in "*Deburau*," the details sink imperceptibly into the beauty of the whole.

Mr. Belasco gives color and beauty to "*Deburau*," and Mr. Atwill breathes life into it. And Granville Barker does all he can to take them away. It is he who has translated the play from the French of Sacha Guitry, and he has seen fit to couch his translation in rhyme, thus making it considerably more difficult for himself, and next to impossible for the audience. One hears a line delivered, and then listens so eagerly for the rhyme to come and put one out of one's misery that one loses all track of the meaning of the speech. And when the rhyme does come, it is apt to be a pretty fairly devastating one. Consider Lionel Atwill handicapped with such speeches as:

I was born in Roumania, at Constanza;
My father was a tight-rope dancer,
I was the fool of the family.

Whatever went wrong, it was always me.
 Oh, and I have been beaten finely
 For nearly, but not quite, breaking my neck!
 I believe I never brought off a trick.
 "Clumsy lout! Clumsy lout! Clumsy lout!"
 And many's the dinner I've gone without
 That practice, on my empty tummy—
 She'd bring me scraps afterward, my poor
 mummy—
 Might make me more imperfect still.

Now you can realize what a truly marvelous feat it is to read those lines sympathetically and movingly. The actor who can speak such rhymes as "trick" and "neck," and keep his audience from realizing the horror of it, has indeed climbed to the heights.

The savants unite in praise of Mr. Atwill and of Mr. Belasco and wax almost bitter in their reaction to Mr. Barker's share of the proceedings, a sort of Granville chorus, you might call their remarks about him, if you could persuade yourself that it was good enough to use. I can be one of the boys as far as that goes, but I cannot join with any real abandon in their hailing of "Deburau" as the world's greatest play. For goodness' sake don't let this go any further, but, save in the last act and the scene in *Deburau's* lodgings, I hovered on the verge of slumber all through the evening.

Neither could I manage to keep particularly alert through several of the acts of "Mixed Marriage," by St. John Ervine. It suffers, perhaps, from being produced after "John Ferguson" and "Jane Clegg." It was written some time before them, though, frankly, I don't think it would have been so extraordinary, even if one had expected nothing of its author. It bears a marked family resemblance to "John Ferguson." The scene is laid up around Belfast way, and the dialect is the same, and there is a great deal of talk about God. The likeness is heightened by the fact that Augustin Duncan and Rollo Peters play the father and son, just as they did in "John Ferguson."

The theme of "Mixed Marriage" is the damage done to Irish unity through the bitter struggle between Catholics and Protestants. The author does not attempt to show the effect of the mixed marriage which all the talk in the play is about. The heroine obligingly walks to the door in the last act, and is promptly killed by a stray bullet from the muskets of offstage soldiers, sent to quell off-stage strikers. I never heard of any off-stage gunmen yet who were not strikingly poor shots; for any person on the stage to open a door or go to a window while they are in the wings practically amounts to suicide. Before this climax is reached, however, there is a vast amount of talking, done in brogue of various degrees of thickness by the different members of the company, and done very well, too. Particularly fine is Margaret Wycherly's performance of her rôle. And what a rôle it is: a thing of whimsical smiles, and kindly headshakings, and gently philosophical utterances beginning "We wimmen know —" I'm sure I don't know what is gained by writing "wimmen" that way, but it must always be done when you're quoting dialect. The precept "Sure, it's quare an' soon that we wimmin foind out that the min are nothin' but bit childer afther all" is spoken at least one hundred and eighty-seven times during the course of the play. And yet Miss Wycherly somehow manages to make her rôle charming and human and likable.

It is pleasant to relate that "Mixed Marriage" has been moved up to the Times Square Theater for a series of matinées, for the tiny Bramhall Theater, where it was first presented, is quare an' stuffy.

It is even more than pleasant to see that "The Emperor Jones" has come to the Selwyn Theater for a series of matinées, also. At the Provincetown Theater, where it was playing, only about six people could behold it at

one time, eight, when the standing room was filled. There is no use trying to add to what better men have already said in praise of Eugene O'Neil's masterly study of terror of the supernatural, and of the superb performance of Charles Gilpin, a negro actor, in the title rôle. One can only hope that, when the run of "The Emperor Jones" is over, Mr. Gilpin will find other plays as well worthy of him. It took long years of effort and discouragement before he was given the opportunity of the O'Neil drama.

In no way are our producers more wasteful of genius than in their disregard of the negro actors. What has become of Opal Cooper, who some seasons ago appeared with the Negro Players? Since that time, his opportunities have probably consisted of an offer to play one-fourth of a quartet in an uptown cabaret, and a chance to don a white cotton wig and say "Gord bress you, Marse Robert," as an old family retainer in a heart-interest drama with its scene laid below the Thomas Dixon line.

There was another series of matinees, of a more exclusive nature, when two Rabindranath Tagore plays, "The Post Office" and "Sacrifice," were given at the Garrick Theater before a select audience of appreciative ladies hung with clanking chains and adorned with beribboned eyeglasses. The actors were earnest workers painted various shades of tan and dressed in costumes which they had evidently made themselves in the evenings, with a little help from mother. The author presided over the entertainment from a box, looking, with his benevolent air and rippling beard, like a sun-burned Santa Claus, and at the conclusion stood in the lobby bowing to the outgoing audience, in the manner first popularized by Raymond Hitchcock.

The plays were rapturously received by the beribboned ones, whose enjoy-

ment was greatly envied by your correspondent. I know that Tagore is considered aces, by some of our loftiest intelligentsia, and I even recall hearing that he was once awarded the Nobel prize for something. I gather that it was for growing such a nice, long beard, but the beauty of his work is, alas, my blind spot.

To return to those attractions which are going on every evening till further notice, we might say a word or so on the subject of "Cornered," the work of Dodson Mitchell, who plays the gruff innkeeper in "The Tavern." The piece has its star Madge Kennedy, too long silent in the movies. I have heard it said that Miss Kennedy delayed her return to the speaking stage until she could find a good play to appear in, but the report must have been grossly exaggerated, for she is appearing in "Cornered." She plays the dual rôle—it is one of those things—of a society girl, and a girl of the underworld who swings a nasty jimmy. And the two girls eventually turn out to be—oh, you'll never guess—twin sisters, one of whom was stolen in infancy. It seems too bad that Madge Kennedy, most engaging of comediennesses, has to be concerned in this business. Of course, she makes it much more bearable than it could possibly be otherwise, but even so— Yet there is this about "Cornered:" it will make a splendid vehicle for Miss Kennedy's return to the screen.

Another quaint trifle is "Pagans," which just dropped in at the Princess Theater, the playhouse that is running dangerously close to the record hitherto held by the Fulton as a housing for unsuccessful productions. The piece served to bring to Broadway Joseph Schildkraut, son of Rudolph Schildkraut of the Jewish Art Theater. Certainly it was the roughest kind of luck for Mr. Schildkraut that his debut was made under such circumstances; from

what could be observed of him through the heavy cloud of the play, he seems to be a most promising actor, and it takes a really good actor to seem even so much as promising under such conditions. Helen Ware was also present in the strikingly unsuited rôle of an opera singer; you might say that she was a round pagan in a square hole. I thought that was going to turn out much better than it did.

And now about the musical offerings. There is good news of them, particularly of "Sally," at the New Amsterdam, with Mr. Ziegfeld as its producer. It isn't a revue, either, it is a real musical comedy, with a whole lot of plot and everything. Leon Errol and Marilyn Miller, who dances more charmingly than ever and really sings this time, are its stars, its scenery is by Urban, its book by Guy Bolton, and Mr. Ziegfeld has assuredly done the handsome thing by it. Dolores, the delightful little Mary Hay, and a typical Ziegfeld chorus are also present, just to make it seem like home to the New Amsterdam patrons, and, what is perhaps the best part of the whole thing, Jerome Kern has written the score. Some of his songs may be reminiscent, but he has taken them from his own past successes. And, after all, who has a better right?

The new Winter Garden exhibit, "The Passing Show of 1921," seems to be the best offering that this theater has sheltered in these many seasons. The songs are decidedly better than usual, there is a great deal of very gratifying dancing, and the costumes are unusually gorgeous. There is a generous amount of Willie Howard, if that is an inducement to you, and even those of us who are somewhat apathetic about him must concede that his imitation of Frank Bacon is indeed remarkable. Personally, if it were a crime to like Marie Dressler I should be well within the law, but evidently few others share

my sentiments, for the great theater rocks with the vociferous appreciation of her efforts. It is a great blow that Harry Watson has so little to do; it is always a great blow. The chorus girls are of that ancient virgineity which is marked by a vaccination scar on the arm.

"Lady Billy," of which Mitzi is the star, is the sort of thing of which Mitzi is always the star. It provides opportunity for her to dress as a boy, to yodel a bit, and to be pert all over the stage. The book and the unusually good lyrics are by Zelda Sears, and there are some decidedly pleasant tunes by Harold Levy. Whether you like the show depends, practically altogether, on whether you like Mitzi, and mostly everybody does.

Nora Bayes has come to town as producer and star of "Her Family Tree." It is an exceptionally beautiful production, with virtually no expense spared as to costumes and lighting. Where the economy was practiced was in the lines and the songs. This department has ever regarded Miss Bayes as one of the greatest women in history, and its fond heart bleeds to hear her say, on hearing some one speak of Bismarck, "Bismarck? That ain't a man, it's a herring." Likewise it sheds bitter tears when she sings a song in which "future" is rhymed with "too sure," and when she permits another ballad in which occur the lines:

She said to her crusader

When good night he bade her.

The bright part of the show is Julius Tannen, whose monologue shines as a good deed in a naughty world. I saw by the paper only yesterday that Mr. Tannen had left "Her Family Tree," but I am sending up a fervent prayer that, for the sake of Miss Bayes' success, his absence from her show may be only temporary. It is too awful to think of "Her Family Tree" without him.

Talks With Ainslee's Readers

SOMEWHERE in the maze of that prodigious work, Boswell's "Life of Samuel Johnson," we recall an expressed sentiment which, as we ponder it, hits us with renewed force. The learned and sagacious doctor wisely observed that it was "strange that there should be so little reading in the world and so much writing." Developing his thesis further, he points out that, in general, people do not willingly read if they can have anything else to amuse them. Too often there is more of pain than of pleasure in the slow progress through a book of the human understanding, for, after all, language is rigid and inadequate to express the fine gradations of our feelings, and, lacking that malleability, the written word easily becomes stodgy, uninteresting, even boring. The writer who can put over his idea with an economy of words, but with a sureness of effect, has an art worth fondling.

BECAUSE of the greater ease of reading simple, concise, terse language, people in general, even those of the more serious and scholarly persuasion, do not turn to books of science, for instance, for recreation. When we read for pleasure, quite naturally we pick the lighter form of literature, the book or story which, by the quick succession of events, stimulates. And, however unconsciously critical, the most nonchalant reader is at all times exacting. A thing measures up to his unformulated, undefined standards or it doesn't. If the quality of the material in a fiction magazine falls short, we believe that no amount of boosting or idle talk will justify the existence of that magazine. It will, in the long run, stand or fall by what it is inherently. Is AINSLEE's hitting you right? Do you find in it the kind of stories that not only please you in the reading but make you look for more like them in each succeeding issue? The magazine is being made for you, its readers. We like to know what you think. By your aid and suggestion we can please you even better hereafter. Let us hear from you.

THE April issue of AINSLEE's, now in preparation, is going to please you mightily, we believe. From the very fetching lady in spring regalia and orchids on Edna Crompton's charming cover to the last page, it is an issue well worth browsing through contentedly. It's a number that's thoroughly entertaining, but it's more; it's stimulating. The complete novelette is the second in the extraordinary series by C. N.

and A. M. Williamson, and is called "The House With the Twisted Chimneys," and the story is even more unusual than its title.

OF short stories there is an unusually fine line-up. Margaret Pedler contributes "Mrs. Carrington's Last Chance," the tale of a woman who through no lack of virtue has become *declassée* in the society to which she really belongs. For the sake of social rehabilitation she embraces for a while the short-sighted plan of marrying the much-younger son of a wealthy upper-class family, who has temporarily capitulated to her charms. But the boy's mother, by her tact, has her innings, and things do not fall entirely Mrs. Carrington's way. Norval Richardson, whose novel, "Pagan Fire," is one of the recent great successes, has a strong story in the April AINSLEE's, called "The Greatest Gift." The story is laid in South America, in an obscure seaport town. Mr. Richardson has spent a great deal of his time in Chile, and knows, therefore, whetof he speaks.

In the April issue, also, there is a story by Ethel Watts Mumford, who has contributed many good things to AINSLEE's in the past. This tale, "A Pupil of Raphael," is of an art connoisseur, his quest for original Italian paintings, and his finding not only of them, but of love. Richard Connell's "A Dab of Local Color," in the April issue, is in the author's characteristic light vein—a story with a twist at the end. "The Man Who Was Caesar" is contributed by Katharine Metcalf Roof, whose novel, "The Great Demonstration," has won such favorable comment. Some one had once said of Haverford that he had "the face of an emperor and the gifts of a dry-goods clerk"—a rare combination which made for a rare career, particularly after he met his Cleopatra in the person of Angela Ridpath.

To those who knew him well, old Nathaniel Stayne's chief characteristic was the word "Rot!" With it he discounted all that was ever presented for his consideration. Eventually it alienated his only son, Arnold Stayne, and all because, like everything else, the boy's love affair with Margaret Dana was, to the old man, just "rot." For a vital, heart-stirring tale read "In Five Parts," by Ferdinand Reyher.

Another generous installment of Berta Ruck's novel, "The Arrant Rover," a superwoman tale by Anice Terhune, Margarita Spalding Gerry's "Flower of the Desert," and Helen Duncan Queen's "Laura MacNeill's Son," complete the April issue.



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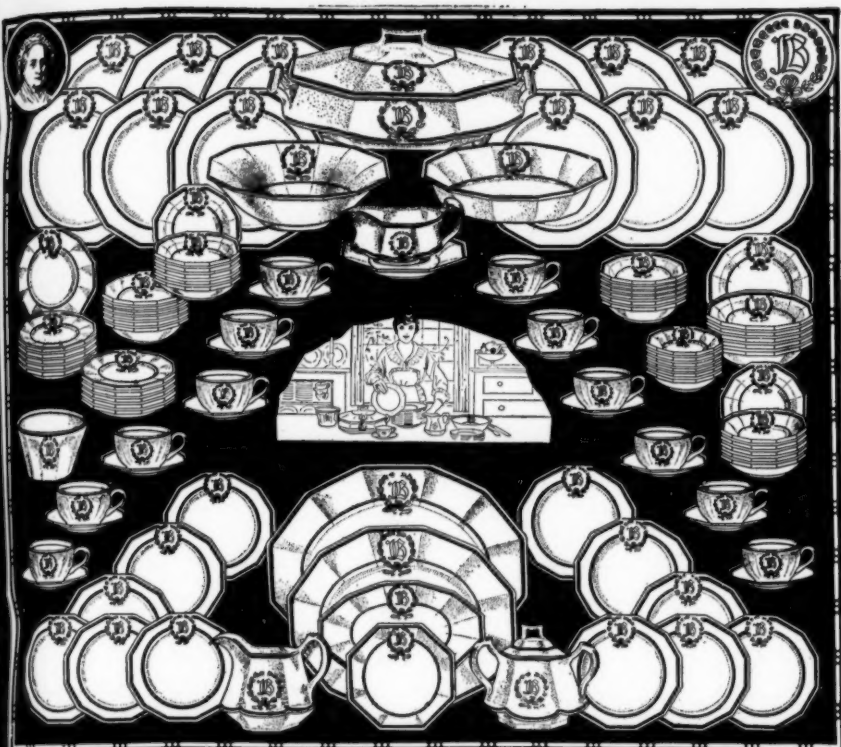
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|Automobile Engineer. | \$4,000 to \$10,000 |Shop Superintendent. | \$3,000 to \$7,000 |
|Automobile Repairman. | \$2,500 to \$4,000 |Employment Manager. | \$4,000 to \$10,000 |
|Civil Engineer. | \$5,000 to \$15,000 |Steam Engineer. | \$2,000 to \$4,000 |
|Structural Engineer. | \$4,000 to \$10,000 |Foreman's Course. | \$2,000 to \$4,000 |
|Business Manager. | \$5,000 to \$15,000 |Photoplay Writer. | \$2,000 to \$10,000 |
|Certified Public Accountant. | \$7,000 to \$15,000 |Sanitary Engineer. | \$2,000 to \$5,000 |
|Accountant and Auditor. | \$2,500 to \$7,000 |Telephone Engineer. | \$2,500 to \$5,000 |
|Draftsman and Designer. | \$2,500 to \$4,000 |Telegraph Engineer. | \$2,500 to \$5,000 |
|Electrical Engineer. | \$4,000 to \$10,000 |High School Graduate. | In two years. |
|General Education. | In one year. |Fire Insurance Expert. | \$3,000 to \$10,000 |

Name..... Address.....

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements



Brings This Gold Decorated 110-Piece Martha Washington Dinner Set

Only \$1 and we ship this superb Dinner Set—yours to use for 30 days before you decide whether to keep or return it at our expense. Artistically shaped, snowy white dishes with glistening gold decoration and your initial in gold surrounded by a wreath in gold on each piece. Of course you will be astonished at our bargain price. We guarantee that nowhere can these dishes be bought for less.

With Your Initial Monogram in Gold

Complete in every feature. This superb gold decorated set comprises: 12 dinner plates, 9 in.; 12 breakfast plates, 7 in.; 12 soup plates, 7 1/4 in.; 12 cups; 12 saucers; 12 cereal dishes, 6 in.; 12 individual bread and butter plates, 6 1/2 in.; 12 sauce dishes; 1 platter, 13 1/2 in.; 1 platter, 11 1/2 in.; 1 celery dish, 8 1/2 in.; 1 sauce boat, 7 1/2 in.; 1 butter plate, 6 in.; 1 vegetable dish, 10 1/2 in., with lid (2 pieces); 1 deep bowl, 8 1/2 in.; 1 oval baker, 9 in.; 1 small deep bowl, 6 in.; 1 gravy boat, 7 1/2 in.; 1 creamer; 1 sugar bowl with cover (2 pieces). Shipped from Chicago warehouse. Shipping weight about 50 lbs. Order by No. 327CMA19. Price of complete set of 110 pieces, \$34.95. Send only \$1 with coupon; balance \$3 monthly.

30 Days' Free Trial

Send only the coupon and \$1 now and we will send you this complete set of 110 pieces for 30 days' use in your home. If not satisfied, return the set in 30 days and we will return your \$1 and pay transportation both ways. If you keep them, pay balance

FREE Bargain Catalog

The great free 432-page Catalog shows you how to make any home beautiful and how to save money. It gives you the opportunity to secure the choicest styles and amazing bargains, watches, silverware, dishes, washing machines, sewing machines, aluminum ware, phonographs, gas engines and cream separators, etc.—all on our easy monthly payment terms. 30 days' trial. Post card or letter brings this great bargain book free by return mail. "Let Hartman Feather Your Nest."

HARTMAN FURNITURE & CARPET CO.
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IMPORTANT!
Set guaranteed first quality. Replacement pieces can be purchased from us for 3 years as this is an "open" pattern.



HARTMAN FURNITURE & CARPET CO.

3913 Wentworth Avenue
Dept. 3064 Chicago, Illinois
I enclose \$1.00. Send 110-piece Golden Martha Washington Dinner Set No. 327CMA19. I am to have 30 days' trial. If not satisfied will ship it back and you will refund my \$1 and pay transportation both ways. If I keep it I will pay \$3.00 per month until price, \$34.95, is paid.

Actual Height of Wreath 1 1/2 inches
Name.....
Address.....
R. F. D..... Box No.....
Town..... State.....
Give Initial Wanted [Any One Letter].....

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ABCDEFGHIJKLMN O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

With acknowledgments to K. C.



That office boy was a good pick

IT WAS my busy day
AND I told the boy.
I COULD not see.
ANY VISITORS.
AND HE popped back.
AND SAID there was.
A GENTLEMAN outside.
WHO WISHED to see me.
AND I said "No."
BUT I guess the boy.
IS LIKE my wife.
AND DOESN'T know
WHO'S BOSS.
FOR BACK he comes.
AND SAYS the man.
WANTS JUST a word.
AND I told the boy.
I COULD tell the man.
JUST WHERE to go.
IN JUST three words.
BUT THE boy came back
AND SAID the man.

COULD SPOT me one.
HIS BUSINESS needed.
JUST TWO words.
AND I'M a sport.
AND CURIOUS too.
SO IN he came.
AND HANDED me.
SOME CIGARETTES to try
AND SAID "They Satisfy."
AND I will state.
HE SAID something.



"THEY satisfy"—that says it. Never
finer tobaccos used in any cigarette
never were tobaccos more carefully and
fully blended. Chesterfields give you all
any cigarette could give, plus a cer-
"satisfy" quality that is exclusively
The blend can't be copied.

They Satisfy Chesterfield

CIGARETTES

LIGGETT & MYERS